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ABSTRACT

An investigation focused on communication demands of the workplace, specifically those placed on checkout operators at a supermarket in Queensland, Australia. Key questions organized the investigation: What is the nature of communication in this workplace? How can this information be obtained? and How can the information be used to develop workplace communications programs? By adopting a naturalistic approach, the study analyzed ongoing events in the supermarket. Methodology included: (1) interviews and document review to gain an orientation to the supermarket; and (2) observations at three sites--the checkout, the shelves, and the tobacco shop--supplemented with informal interviews. Data were organized and analyzed in regard to physical aspects, the actors, and activities and events. Evidence from the study supports a view that the workplace provides substantial social and contextual support for communication. The supermarket uses many sign systems, some of which signal more than just one meaning. Checkout operators make predictions and inferences based on underlying sets of rules learned on the job. They require a range of complex communication skills plus an ability to develop and use a variety of problem-solving strategies to help save time, reduce labor, and increase accuracy. (Thirty-eight references and 22 figures are included. Fifteen appendices provide the following: glossary; price list; illustrations of stripping, barcode, and flags; sample copies of the slip, delivery and change order forms, Kodak processing envelope, processing service dealer record, unpriced items list, and department codes; sign-on sheet and assessment sheet; and a description of a member check.) (NLA)

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COMMUNICATION AT WORK:

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF CHECKOUT OPERATORS

Jean Searle

QUEENSLAND COUNCIL FOR ADULT LITERACY

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SUMMARY

This investigation focuses on the communication demands of the workplace, specifically those placed on checkout operators at one supermarket. Key organising questions were:

* What is the nature of communication in this particular workplace?
* How can this information be obtained?
* How can the information gained from the study be used to develop workplace communication programs?

By adopting a naturalistic approach the researcher was able to experience, document and analyse on-going events in the supermarket.

Evidence from this study supports a view that the workplace provides substantial social and contextual support for communication. Further, it was found that the supermarket uses many sign systems, some of which signal more than one meaning. Checkout operators therefore, must be able to make predictions and inferences based on underlying sets of rules learnt on-the-job. They require a range of complex communication skills plus an ability to develop and use a variety of problem-solving strategies to help save time, reduce labour, and increase accuracy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Introduction

With the increasing communication demands of today's technological age, and the far-reaching effects of award restructuring, many people who not long ago would have entered the workforce in unskilled or semi-skilled positions, now find that they have insufficient communication skills (facility with spoken and written language, and other sign systems) and have joined the ranks of the unemployed. Others have found that they require retraining but most retraining programs assume they can communicate meaning effectively.

In a recent article, "The Hidden Costs of Illiteracy", Supriya Singh (1989) argues that Australia cannot afford the cost of inadequate communication. In addition to social and personal costs, she estimates that the cost to industry is $3.2 billion annually.

There is research evidence to show that problems arising from a lack of written language skills are increasingly being identified, but there is little recognition of the role that communication in other sign systems, plays in performance in the workplace and therefore, arguably, in training for the job.

In order to provide effective communication courses for the unemployed and under-employed, it is necessary to have information regarding workplace communication requirements that encompass more than reading and writing skills. This study seeks to provide a framework for identifying communication requirements in the workplace through investigating the nature of communication in one particular workplace, a supermarket.

2. Background

Most workplace research to date has concentrated on 'literacy' as a process of reading and sometimes writing. Very few studies have addressed the broader issue of communication which encompasses language in the spoken and written form, as well as numeracy and use of other sign systems.

Communication and sign systems

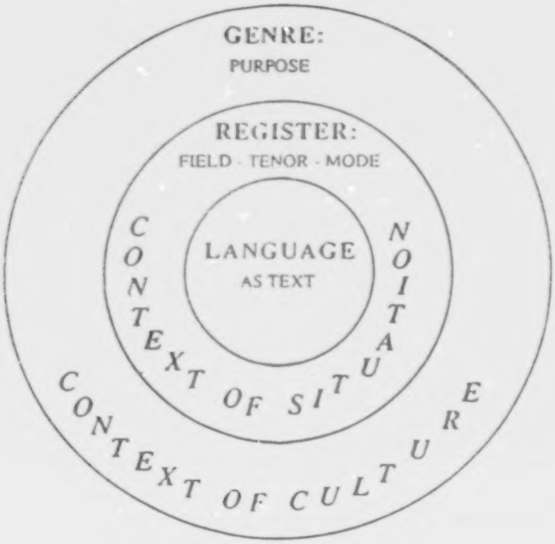
A sign according to Eco (1079) is **"everything** that on the grounds of all previously established social convention, can be taken as **something standing for something else"** (p 15). In the supermarket, for example, the checkout operators respond to the ringing of a bell or use a variety of colour codes. Such sign systems are important as often they take the place of spoken or written language. Success in communication therefore depends in part on the operator's ability to understand these workplace signals and the underlying rules in order to respond accurately.

Communication and social context

In order to fully understand communication in a particular workplace it is necessary to allow for both the **context of situation** and the **context of culture** (Halliday and Hasan, 1986). Figure 1 presents a model of these contexts.

FIGURE 1

Language and Context



This is particularly relevant to the workplace in which the **context of culture** is the specific culture of the supermarket and the **context of situation** might refer to three physical sites in which the checkout operators work. Given a context, it is possible to account for the function or purpose of the communication - the **genre**; and the appropriate choice of language depending on the situation and the people involved - the **register**.

So, communication in the workplace not only involves knowledge of and familiarity with signs, but also implies a knowledge and use of language in that particular context. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 in "The Checkout Operator As a User of Spoken Language."

In this study it is proposed to use the term 'communication' to encompass language, both spoken and written, and other sign systems through which people communicate in the workplace. Definitions of other terms used in this report are presented in Appendix A.

3. Organising Questions

The original questions were:

1. What is the nature of communication in a particular workplace?
2. How can this information be obtained?
3. How can the information gained from the study be used to develop workplace communication programs?

However it soon became apparent that many more questions needed to be asked and these became more defined during the course of the study.

4. Organisation of this report

The background and initial planning of the research was informed by several previous studies as documented in Chapter 2. The methodology outlined in Chapter 3 was firmly grounded in the invaluable information gained from the works of Spradley and McCurdy (1972); Spradley (1979, 1980); Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1986) and, at a later stage, Fleet and Cambourne (1989). The limitations of the study were set after completion of Phase 1 of the research and the subsequent narrowing of focus resulted in the data which are analysed in Chapter 4.

Discussion of various aspects of communication forms the major part of Chapter 5. However, during the analysis of data and report writing, an underlying theme emerged which had major implications for the study. This issue is discussed in the section on "Checkout Operators and Accountability". This is followed in Chapter 6 by some interpretive observations developed during the course of the study, plus implications for educators and future research.

Examples of written language or artifacts, collected from the workplace, are presented in a series of Appendices. Also included is the evidence of a checkout operator which verifies the research report, Appendix O.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. What is known about communication in the workplace.

A search of available literature revealed that most research has concentrated on literacy rather than the broader aspects of communication in the workplace. Moreover use of the term literacy, in workplace research, has been remarkably fluid.

Researchers have been concerned with:

* The nature of literacy demands in the workplace:
  - assessing the relationship between literacy abilities and job requirements;
  - literacy and on-the-job performance.
* The mismatch between the literacy demands at school or in training and those required on-the-job.
* Problem solving on-the-job.
* The workplace as a social situation.

While acknowledging the importance of research into the nature of literacy, this report will focus on research relating to workplace issues. Each of these issues will be examined in turn.

2. The nature of workplace literacy demands.

> A person is functionally literate when he [sic] has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and whose attainment in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community's development.
>
> (UNESCO, cited in Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, 1981, p.8).

This definition has significance for the current research for three reasons: firstly, literacy is linked to numeracy, although no mention is made of spoken language. Secondly, literacy is placed in a social context. Thirdly, literacy is linked to access to the workforce. The definition allows for the capability to engage in various activities previously denied because of inadequate literacy. Significantly, by the 1970's functional literacy became synonymous with literacy for work. However, although the language used appears to foreshadow research into the social nature of literacy, the actual response, particularly in the United States, was to measure skills.

Assessing the relationship between literacy ability and job requirements.

Functional literacy therefore referred to the possession of certain reading or writing skills, which could be measured in a variety of ways (Kirsch & Guthrie, 1975; Smith, 1976; Sticht, 1972, 1975, 1977). These were the skills deemed important for an individual to perform a job related literacy task; the rationale being based on a skills-based model of learning. Workplace literacy then was being used to match individuals to jobs. For example, the emphasis of Sticht's early work was on targeting skills which could be taught in army training programs.

Sticht (1975) defined functional literacy in terms of job related literacy demands:

> possession of those literacy skills needed to successfully perform some reading task imposed by an external agent between the reader and a goal the reader wishes to obtain (p. 4).

The premise was that by using this definition, and given a thorough knowledge of the reading demands of various jobs and of valid measures of individual skills, various strategies could be meaningfully employed to match individuals to jobs - specifically in the armed forces.

However, no reference was made to competencies other than reading until Smith's (1976) work. He examined the communication skills which are used in the performance of occupational work, and commented on the implications of those skills in so far as they affect reading strategies and standards. The term 'communication skills' includes the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Smith however was only concerned with listing the skills required to do the job rather than evaluating communication in the social context.

Rush (1985) investigated a range of communication skills in 10 skilled occupations and was concerned with the reading, writing, speaking and listening requirements of the job; comparing those requirements with occupational training; and evaluating the relative importance of the identified competencies to job success. The study is interesting for three reasons: the use of tape recordings of oral language; the questioning of the effectiveness of readability scores on text, which becomes familiar through repetition and integration with other tasks; and the literacy recommendations suggested for Adult Basic Education teachers who are helping students prepare for success in work roles.

Literacy and on-the-job performance.

Metacognitive aspects of the reading process were introduced for the first time in Sticht's (1977) research. Sticht identified different types of reading and found that most reading on-the-job was for immediate use 'reading-to-do' which differed from the 'reading-to-learn' situation in training programs. Other variables such as prior knowledge of tasks, information processing skills, and the storage and retrieval of information were also identified as part of complex analyses required to comprehend materials.

The transferability of the research from military occupations to civilian occupations was tested by Diehl and Milkulecky (1980) in relating literacy to on-the-job performance. This study confirmed that daily reading, on average for 113 minutes, is a requirement of most jobs. Further, that reading materials must be viewed as an additional source of information for employees to complement their existing knowledge. In some situations workers use reading as a tool but often they will just ask for information.

Diehl and Mikulecky (1980) devised a Job Literacy Survey which was used to collect data on literacy demands, attitudinal factors, ability factors and extra-linguistic factors. This study marked a turning point in the search for workplace literacy research which addressed the issues of job-related, reading requirements and also the contextualised nature of workplace literacy. Although the study was limited to literacy skills it appeared that a job-literacy survey would be the best way to collect data.

However in a paper responding to Diehl and Mikulecky, Jacob and Crandall (1979) questioned the use of self-reporting techniques as subjects are often unaware of what the researcher regards as reading. Jacob and Crandall (1979) stated that many literacy activities are often under-reported:

> Literacy activities may involve reading and writing short notes or messages, filing and retrieving information from documents to answer a short question over the telephone. These would rarely be identified as 'literacy activities' by people performing them, yet they require writing and reading and, in fact, may occur frequently during the work day (Jacob and Crandall, 1979, p. 5).

So, Jacob and Crandall suggested an ethnographic approach, using participant observation and interviews with subjects as they read and write on-the-job.

3. The mismatch between literacy demands at school or training and those on-the-job.

Although an analysis of the training program for this particular retail organisation is not part of the present research study, evidence is presented which indicates that there is often a lack of commonality between the literacy demands made in training and those of the workplace. While workers use literacy skills to accomplish tasks and solve problems, they also use extralinguistic cues and social systems in the workplace as aids in the communication process. These uses of literacy and the ability to communicate effectively often are not the focus of school or training programs. Thus many people entering the workforce face the problem of learning communication skills on-the-job, or transferring knowledge about communication from one setting to another (Mikulecky, 1984).

In his 1981 study, Mikulecky found that reading at work is different from reading in school or in training. In related studies (Mikulecky, 1981, 1982) he examined the literacy demands, competencies and strategies required in daily reading at high school, technical school and a cross-section of occupations. The aim was to determine the extent to which literacy in the schools is a preparation for various occupational literacy demands. The study demonstrated that students read less often at school than most workers on the job; they do so less completely; and are expected to comprehend easier material; which is read in less depth; and use strategies which are less effective than those used by workers.

It was also suggested that a major problem is that of 'transferability', "people learn what they are taught and transfer is limited for many learners" (Mikulecky, 1984, p.254). The implication for employers and trainers is that employees require good communication skills, especially oral skills, together with the ability to interpret sign systems and develop strategies on-the-job. Therefore job training must be contextualised and relevant. Similar implications may be drawn from the current research.

In Australia, Morris and Cope (1982) found that workers in a variety of trades relied largely in verbal instructions and very few required writing skills at levels below supervisor. Although Morris and Cope did not study communication skills in the workplace, theirs is the only research to date in Australia to describe literacy and numeracy demands in trade areas. Significantly they also pointed out that employer perceptions of literacy and numeracy demands were likely to be different from workplace actuality.

4. Problem solving on-the-job.

During the analysis of data in this study, it became apparent that checkout operators employed a number of problem-solving techniques. For research in this area, the work of Mikulecky and Ehlinger (1986) is important. These researchers believe that literacy in the workplace is used primarily for problem solving.

In her study of a dairy, Scribner (1983) also discusses on-the-job problem-solving skills. But in contrast to Mikulecky and Ehlinger, Scribner chose a naturalistic approach. The numeracy demands of the checkout operators' job in the supermarket are similar to those described by Scribner, so her analysis is most useful. This will be discussed further in Chapter 5 in the section "The Checkout Operator and Numeracy Events".

5. The workplace as a social situation.

Amiel Sharon (1974) of the Educational Testing Service, was one of the first to investigate what adults read. Sharon's survey revealed that the average American reads for up to two hours a day, mainly during daily activities and on-the-job:

> Reading is not an isolated act but occurs in the context of more general activities such as working, shopping or travelling (Sharon, 1974, p. 169).

This survey is significant as it is the first study to place reading within a social context. Social concepts of job literacy suggest that literacy tasks on-the-job are usually completed in an information rich context, so that readers often use extralinguistic cues to aid understanding, such as asking someone for information or referring to colour or shape. Jacob and Crandall (1979) stated that it is not always necessary to read materials in order to accomplish the task. Both Scribner (1983) and Green (1988) demonstrate that language use reflects the social situation. So, as shown in Chapter 1, language in the workplace should be interpreted in its social context (Halliday, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1986) as language behaviour and language code which may be analysed from a systemic point of view.

In contrast to early definitions of 'functionality' (Kirsch & Guthrie, 1980; Sticht, 1977) in which a person's functionality is measured on a uni-dimensional scale, Scribner and Schafft (1986) argue that functional literacy involves the accomplishment of work related tasks which include reading and writing as components, but other personal characteristics and features of the social situation are also vitally important.

Further valuable insights into observing communication in a natural setting were provided by the work of ethnographers such as Shirley Brice Heath (1980, 1982, 1983) and Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1988).

6. Summary.

Each of the studies which has been reviewed has had some influence on the current research project. The researchers have demonstrated that:

1. Communication in the workplace involves a multiplicity of variables:
   - the purpose for reading and writing;
   - the use of prior knowledge; and
   - the use of problem solving and task analysis strategies.

2. Reading and writing are ubiquitous activities but many people engaging in them are unaware that they are using literacy skills.

3. There is a difference between the nature of reading and writing at school or in training and on-the-job.

4. Despite the importance of the social context for communication in the workplace, few studies of workplaces observe and record use of spoken and written language, or other sign systems.

While the tendency in workplace research has been to focus on literacy skills, it is important to recognise that workplaces are complex communication systems (Scribner, 1983) in which written symbols are but one form of communication. Equally important to the culture of the workplace is the role of the sign systems, whether these be spoken language, signs, or alpha-numeric symbols. The increased use of computer technology in the workplace means that any observation should not be limited to literacy demands alone but must be broadened to include the communication patterns of the whole situation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

1. Why a Naturalistic Approach

The workplace selected for this study is a suburban supermarket which, as stated in Chapter 1 is a 'culture'. Therefore there are general expectations about what is to be found there (artifacts), the staff and customers (actors), what they do (activities and events) and the organisation and routines (Spradley, 1980). Communication therefore will be determined by the social situation of the workplace as well as the individual's competencies. Thus a form of ethnographic research, which requires the observation of actors and activities in a natural setting would be the most appropriate research method.

> If skill systems are active or practice-dependent one way to determine their characteristics and course acquisition is to study them as they function in these practices ... **the practises themselves need to become the object of study** (Scribner, 1983, p.7).

2. How the inquiry was conducted

The design of a naturalistic inquiry cannot be given in advance, it must emerge or develop as the study proceeds. However the researcher commences the study with a broad, three-phase plan: orientation and overview; focused exploration; and member-check phase (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These phases are outlined in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Phases of the Inquiry

	1988	August	Workplace seminar.
		Sept 8	Interview with student.
		Sept	Interviews with EDO, Personnel, CES.
Phase 1		Oct	Orientation & Overview.
		Nov	Analysis of data.
		Dec	Report on Phase 1. Background reading on naturalistic research.
Phase 2	1989	Feb	Interview with EDO.
		April	Initial interviews.
		May	Period of focused
		June	exploration.
			Data analysis.
		July	
		Sept	
		Oct	
			Initial draft report.
		Nov	
			First member check.
	1990	Feb	Re-draft of report.
Phase 3			Member check with key informant.

Phase 1

Phase 1 of this study involved a pilot research project in the supermarket. This phase began with an interview with the State Executive Development Officer (EDO) regarding the organisation of and access to the supermarket. Access to training manuals and other workplace documents was also provided. Follow up interviews were also conducted with the EDO and Personnel Manager. The researcher visited the supermarket one day a week for three weeks, during which time interviews were conducted with employees and observations made. This gave the investigator an orientation towards the particular supermarket and allowed questions such as: 'What are the major events in this social situation?' and 'Who are the major actors?' to be asked.

This resulted in an overview of the organisation of the supermarket and of the jobs of some of the employees. Communication appeared to be influenced by: what the employee learns and is expected to perform, on-the-job; and prior experience from other aspects of daily life. The communication demands of different jobs were found to be quite distinctive, so it would be necessary to investigate each job. As this was beyond the resources of this study it was decided to focus in depth on the communication demands of one particular job.

Phase 2

Phase 2, that of focused exploration, investigated the communication demands of one particular job within the supermarket, that of the checkout operator. This job was selected as it is one which could be accessible to many unemployed people.

As with Phase 1, the initial step in Phase 2 was an interview with the EDO early in 1989 to acquaint him with the findings of Phase 1 and request the continued co-operation of the store.

The initial visit to the store in Phase 2, was made early in April 1989 and involved an interview with the Store Manager, second in command and Front End staff.

Everyone agreed to co-operate in the study and providing the store was not busy, all were allowed to talk to the investigator (which proved to be essential for member checking later). Initial site observations were made during April with more focused exploration being made during May and June. This involved the researcher being at the store on average three days a week. The time between store visits was used to write up notes and for the initial sifting of data.

It has been shown that the culture of the supermarket is made up of a range of situations which can be described through:

- the physical context (including 'artifacts')
- the social context (including 'actors')
- the 'activities' or events, which make up the organised routines and daily patterns of communication on-the-job.

Physical Context

Phase 1 led to the identification of three physical contexts in which the checkout operators use communication skills:

- at the checkout;
- filling supermarket shelves;
- at the tobacco shop.

Checkout operators were observed in each location, over a period of time. The observations were supplemented with informal interviews (some were tape recorded) with key informants in which the employee describes each situation and the artifacts, in her own concrete terms. This was useful in analysing the data and building up taxonomies of 'insider' terminology which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Social Context

The second element of the culture is that of the actors - in this case the checkout operators. Phase 1 showed that the store employed both full time and casual operators. These employees were identified by the Front End Controller. The manager introduced the researcher to the staff, the nature of the research was outlined, and the co-operation of the staff was requested.

As the study progressed the initial sample of checkout operators was further refined in order to focus on the permanent operators. It also became apparent that in each of the three physical contexts the checkout operators communicated in a variety of ways with other actors. Prolonged observations of employees in these situations was required to identify the other actors. Who they were. Why they were the focus of communication. Why actor 'X' was consulted and not actor 'Y'.

Activities

The third element of the culture is that of the activities. In any supermarket there is an obvious "stream of behaviour" (Spradley, 1980) i.e. what goes on in a supermarket. Patterns of activity were identified in each situation, These patterns related to each other to form 'events'. Interviews with the key informants helped to organise data. For example, employees were asked to describe everything they did when they entered the store at the start of their shift or when they 'opened up' at the checkouts. Informal checks were also made with the informants regarding the investigator's perceptions of the activities.

3. Data collection

Participant Observation

In discussing naturalistic inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated:

> The human will tend, therefore, toward interviewing, observing, mining available documents and records, taking account of non-verbal cues, and interpreting inadvertant unobtrusive measures (p. 199).

This broadly describes the conceptual framework for this study. Lincoln and Guba's graphic representation of The Flow of Naturalistic Inquiry is presented as Figure 3.

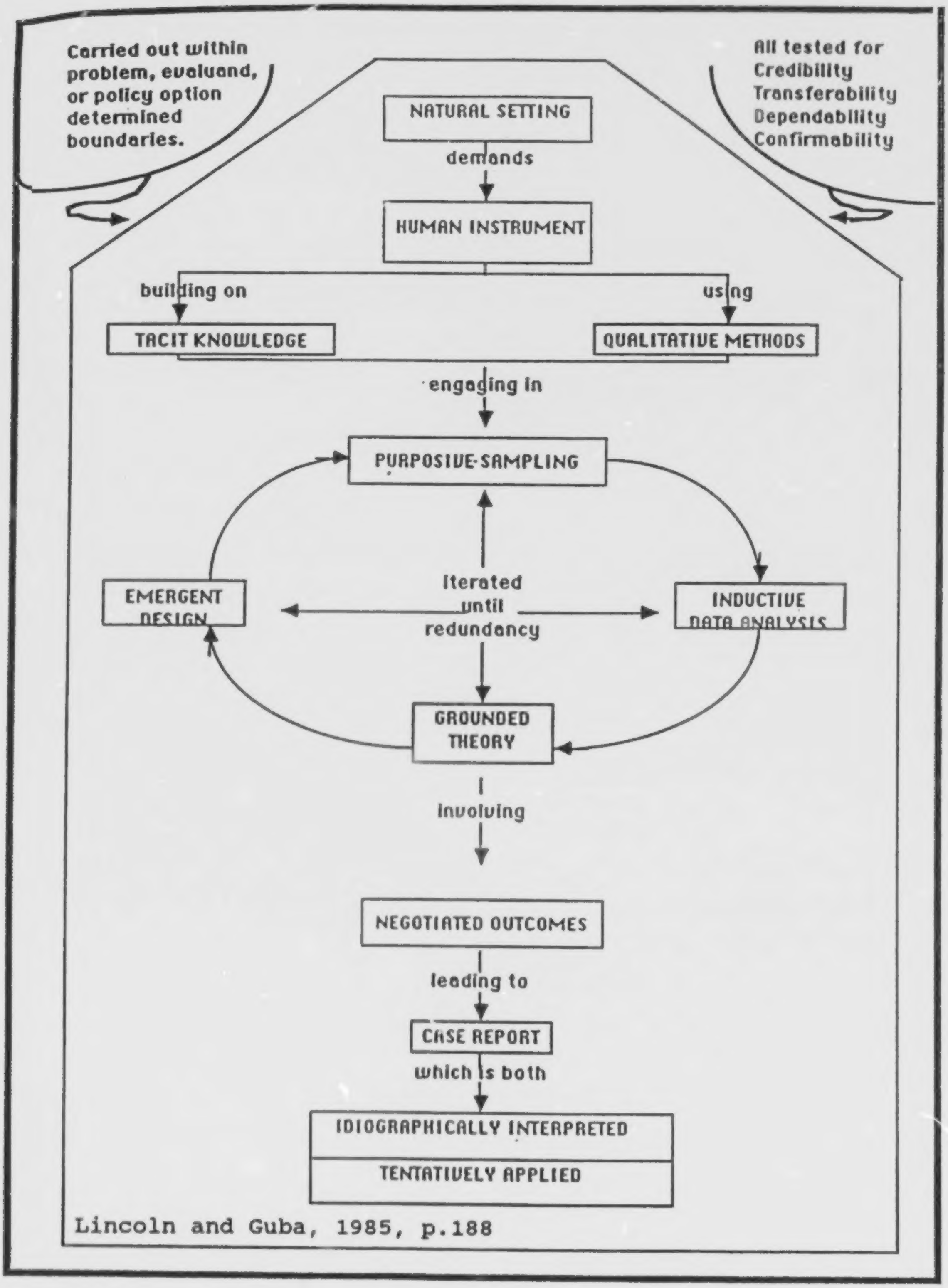
Fundamental to the success of any naturalistic study is the role of the researcher as participant observer. In view of this the investigator made written field notes in which each actor was identified and information was recorded exactly as it was spoken, including any 'inside' words or phrases. A condensed account was made of observations on site which was later expanded with as much detail as possible. At the same time a fieldwork journal was kept, with each entry recording personal experiences, ideas, feelings, or problems. Alongside these, a record of analysis and interpretation or insights was also maintained as part of the audit trail.

Observations

On several occasions the investigator accompanied a participant during an entire day and made observations from the time she signed on in the morning, to the time she signed off at the end of her shift. This was most important in order to gain an overview of the varied activities of the workplace and also to observe the pattern or sequence of events. More detailed observations of particular activities and interactions between participants and other actors, were also made.

FIGURE 3

The Flow of Naturalistic Inquiry



Carried out within problem, evaluand, or policy option determined boundaries.
All tested for Credibility Transferability Dependability Confirmability
NATURAL SETTING
demands
HUMAN INSTRUMENT
building on
using
TACIT KNOWLEDGE
QUALITATIVE METHODS
engaging in
PURPOSIVE SAMPLING
EMERGENT DESIGN
iterated until redundancy
INDUCTIVE DATA ANALYSIS
GROUNDED THEORY
involving
NEGOTIATED OUTCOMES
leading to
CASE REPORT
which is both
IDIOGRAPHICALLY INTERPRETED
TENTATIVELY APPLIED

Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.188

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with key informants - the full-time checkout operators - in order to obtain constructions or reconstructions of events. They were also asked to verify, correct or extend information obtained from other sources (triangulations); and also to check constructions developed by the inquirer. To obtain maximum 'fidelity' some interviews with checkout operators were recorded on audio tape. As observations proceeded more specific, structured interviews and observation protocols were constructed. As reported by Audrey Grant (1987):

> The interviews followed an open structure, with the aim of taking seriously the interviewee's own perspective, experience and ways of evaluating things. Thus instead of a standard schedule, questions within common topic areas were adapted to each interviewee's responses and particular situation" (p.4)

Collection of Artifacts

The investigator identified, collected and analysed documents and records found in the workplace such as: lists, forms, dockets, and stock records; as these were in the language of the workplace and supplied a rich source of contextually relevant information. Some of these documents appear in the Appendix and are referred to in greater detail later in the report. Detailed accounts were also kept on how the artifacts were used or referred to on-the-job.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis of information gained from observation was carried out in an open ended way using the 'constant comparative method' (Glaser & Strauss, cited in Le Compte &

Preissle Goetz, 1982) as the study proceeded. This means that as the data was collected it was continuously sifted and reviewed, for example "is X similar to or different from Y?" The researcher classified and re-classified data-seeking to identify emerging themes. Initially these were broad categories: space, objects, actors, activities, time, goals, feelings and routines (Spradley, 1980). These themes were then explored in greater depth during further observations in order to facilitate the emergence of patterns and the structure of later data collection phases.

After the raw data was carefully sifted and analysed, it was possible to identify emerging themes. These were: routines (at the checkout, kiosk, and shelves), literacy events, numeracy events, use of language, use of sign systems, and checking. The examination of these forms and functions of communication in the workplace was influenced by the work of Heath (1978, 1982, 1983) in describing literacy events, by Cochrane-Smith (1984) Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988), and Fleet and Cambourne (1989) in conducting the research and writing the report.

5. Establishing Credibility

In order to make the findings credible the researcher used various techniques. Through **prolonged engagement** the investigator became orientated to the culture of the supermarket and the different social situations in order to discover how communication is embedded in the social context. **Persistent observation** over a period of time, was necessary to focus on those elements or characteristics of the situation which formed the routines and patterns of the workplace, and to identify atypical events. **Time** was also important to take account of any distortions which appeared in the data and also to develop rapport and trust with the key informants. The technique of **triangulation**, was also used to validate information against other sources or methods of collection, such as observations and interviews.

Continuous member checks, both formal and informal, were conducted during the study, whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions were tested with the checkout operators from whom the data was originally collected. Phase 3 of the study involved a more formal member check at the end of the study in which a draft of the final report was assessed.

Peer debriefing was carried out by a non-involved peer professional, so that any biases of the researcher were probed, meanings explored and the bases for interpretation clarified. This also served to test working hypotheses, emerging theories and research designs.

Finally, an **audit trail** was maintained (Halpern, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) so that data at all stages of the study is opened to inspection in order to demonstrate dependability and confirmabilty. The fieldwork journal also provides an on-going record of experiences, analyses and insights.

6. Validity

Whereas it is possible in empirical research, to make precise statements about external validity, these cannot be specified in naturalistic inquiry. However, the researcher concentrated on providing the **thick description** of actors and activities necessary to enable someone who is interested in using this method of observation and interview, to decide whether it could be used to identify the communication demands of some other workplace. Although individual observations cannot be entirely replicated, it is possible that the observational methods could be transferable.

7. **Phase 3 - member check phase**.

Finally, after the data was collected, analysed and the report written, came Phase 3 or "member check phase" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p.236). This involved taking the report back to the workplace. Only one of the participants in the study was still operating in the supermarket and she agreed to read the report. The checkout operator verified that the data presented was substantially correct. In only a few instance did she correct or amend the information, thus establishing the credibility of the research (Appendix O).

This chapter has demonstrated that a form of ethnographic research is most appropriate for a study conducted in a social situation in which there is a range of variables: physical situations, social situations, and activities.

Chapter 4 gives details of the data which was collected and analysed, leading into a discussion in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

It was suggested in Chapter 2, that the communication requirements of the checkout operators would reflect the social situation of the workplace as well as the individual's competencies. In order to fully comprehend the communication demands of the job of checkout operator, it is essential to describe the social situation taking each aspect in turn:

1. Physical aspects
2. The actors
3. Activities and events

Whilst this section may appear lengthy it is necessary to give a full description in order to demonstrate the emergent patterns of events.

1. Physical aspects

The selected supermarket is situated at the base of a small L-shaped shopping centre. A carpark fills the L-shape and customers and staff enter the store through one of two entrances from the carpark. Stock deliveries are made to 'receiving' or the loading bay 'out the back' at the rear of the store.

From the floor plan provided (Figure 4) it can be seen that there are ten checkouts located at the front of the store: five checkouts; a partially enclosed service desk, raised above the level of the checkouts; then another five checkouts. Checkouts 1 and 10 are security checkouts as they are closest to the two entrances to the store from the carpark. These are located at either end of the checkouts. Directly opposite each entrance is a turnstile into the store with a small trolley bay to one side. To the left of the right hand turnstile and trolley bay, is the tobacco shop, also known as 'the kiosk', the 'smoke shop', 'the

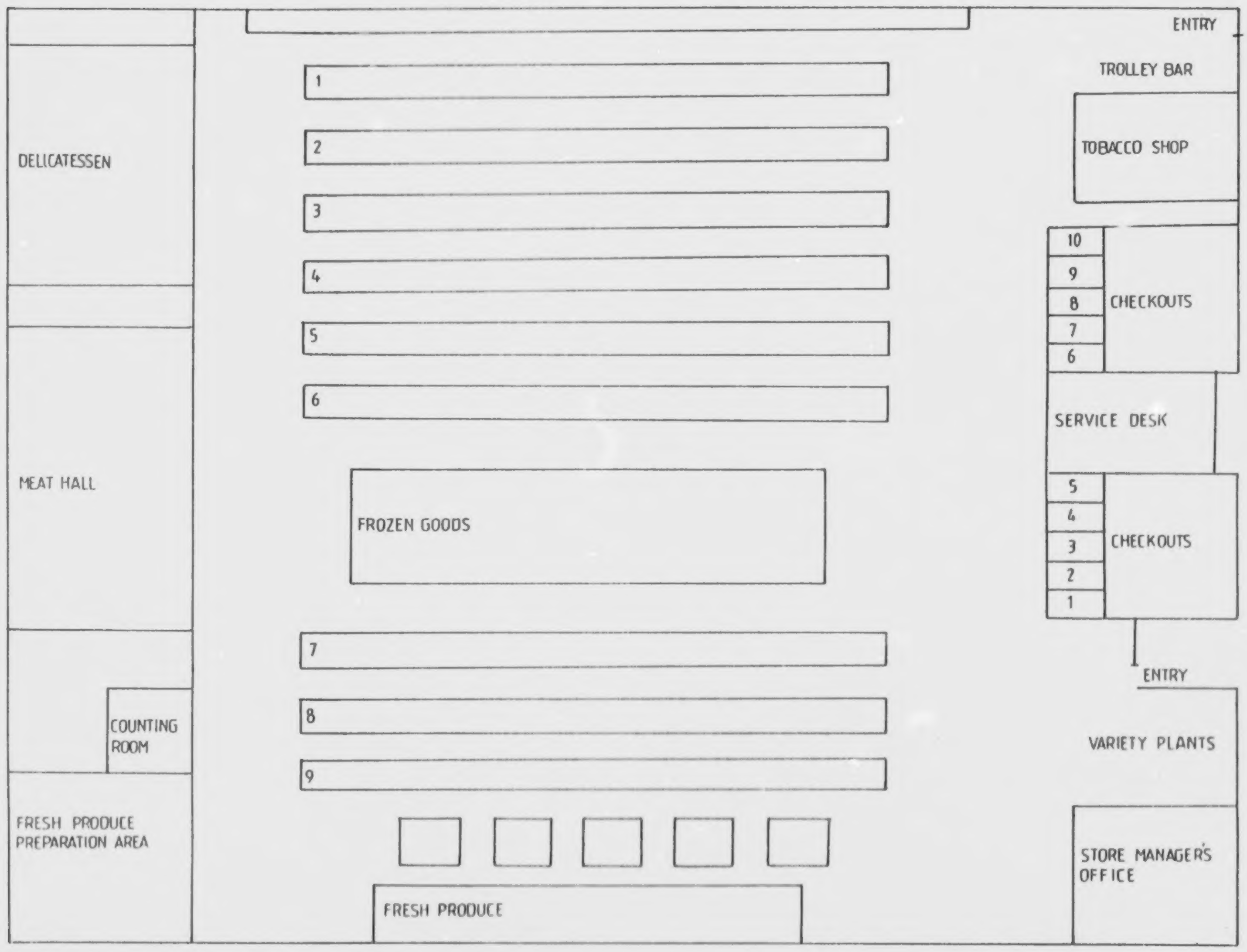

ENTRY
TROLLEY BAR
TOBACCO SHOP
DELICATESSEN
1
2
3
4
5
6
10
9
8
7
6
CHECKOUTS
SERVICE DESK
MEAT HALL
FROZEN GOODS
5
4
3
2
1
CHECKOUTS
7
ENTRY
8
COUNTING ROOM
9
VARIETY PLANTS
FRESH PRODUCE PREPARATION AREA
STORE MANAGER'S OFFICE
FRESH PRODUCE

FIGURE 4

Floorplan of the Supermarket

cage' or '11'. Customers may come to the front of the kiosk without entering the main part of the store. Here they are served by the checkout operator on checkout 10, which is an '8 items or less' lane. Adjacent to the front left entrance and turnstile, is a half wall and glass partition, behind which is a garden shop. Behind this again are the double mirror windows of the store office and manager's office.

Although the checkout operators move throughout the store, they are mainly involved with activities at the 'Front End'. This is the area at the front of the store which includes the checkout area and kiosk, and extends to the front windows of the store. The activities of the checkout operators were identified in relation to three sites, largely within this area:

- the checkouts;
- the kiosk; and
- shelves - at the checkout and also in the store.

Checkouts

The first site is that of the checkout area. Each checkout consists of several parts (Figs. 5 & 6). The main features of the checkout are: the tower; the register; the bench; and the door. When a checkout is in use, a light at the top of the tower illuminates the checkout number and also indicates if the checkout is 8 items or less. Attached to the tower are the price lists, also known as 'flaps' or 'lists for operating', and the Customer Display Screen (C.D.S.) which displays the item price. The names given to objects vary from store to store.

As can be seen from the list of objects found in the checkout area (Figure 7) some objects are referred to by more than one name.

As this particular store is a 'scanning' store, items have a barcode instead of a price sticker, which means that the barcode is scanned rather than a price being keyed in on the register.

FIGURE 5

Plan of the Checkout Area

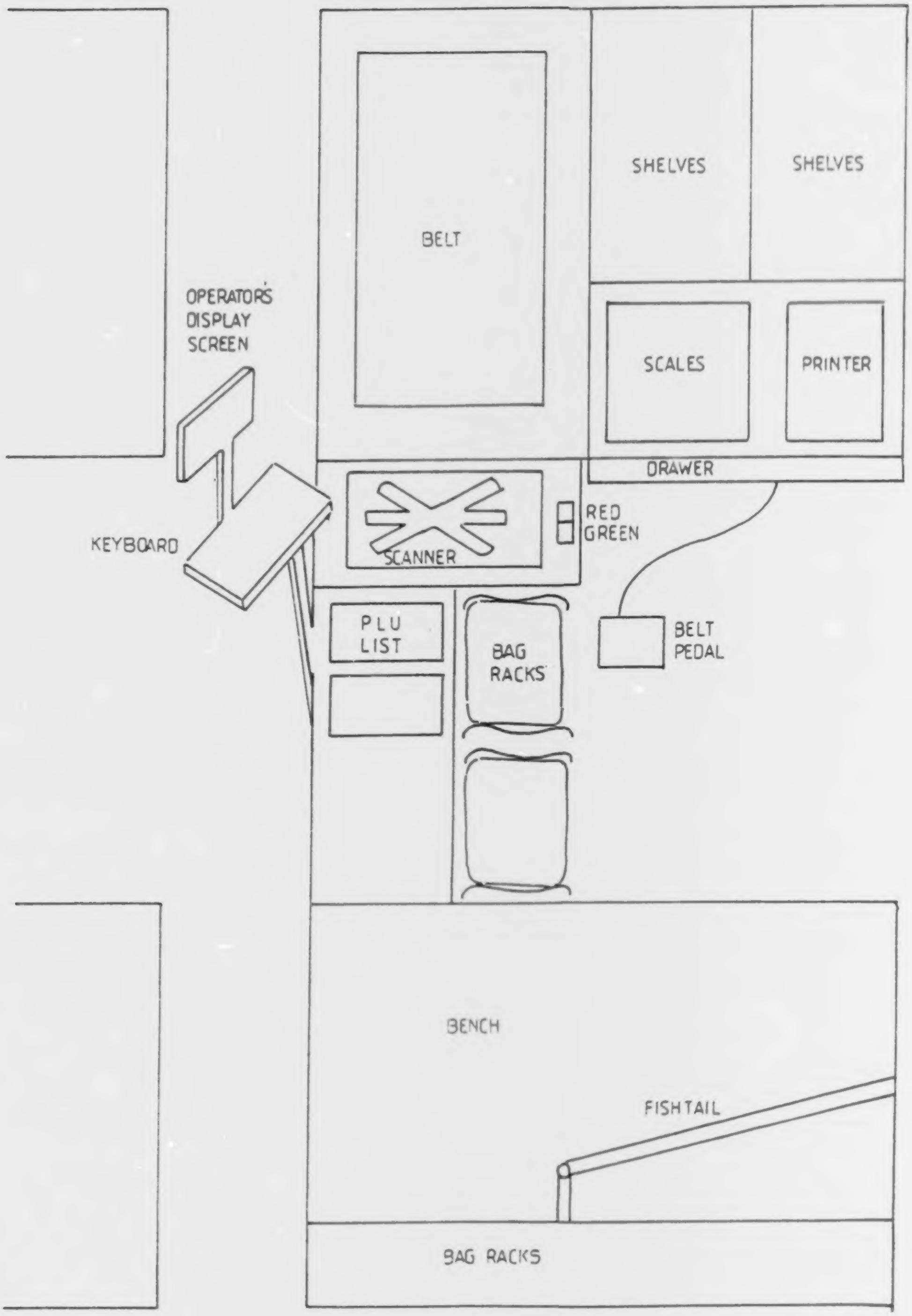

SHELVES
SHELVES
BELT
OPERATORS DISPLAY SCREEN
SCALES
PRINTER
DRAWER
RED
GREEN
SCANNER
KEYBOARD
PLU LIST
BAG RACKS
BELT PEDAL
BENCH
FISHTAIL
BAG RACKS

FIGURE 6

The Tower

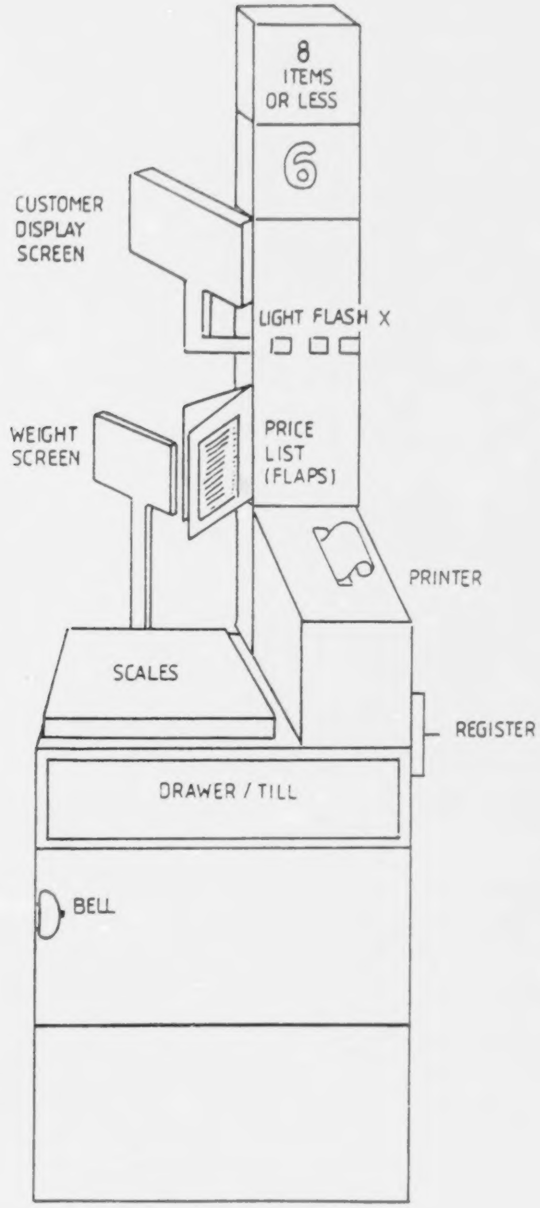

8
ITEMS
OR LESS
6
CUSTOMER
DISPLAY
SCREEN
LIGHT FLASH X
WEIGHT
SCREEN
PRICE
LIST
(FLAPS)
PRINTER
SCALES
REGISTER
DRAWER / TILL
BELL

FIGURE 7

Objects in the Checkout Area

Tower
- light
  - x items (8 items or less)
  - n (checkout number)
- price list
  - flaps
  - lists for operating
- customer display screen (C.D.S.)

Register
- register
  - drawer
  - till
    - clip
    - docket (to ch.ops)
- printer
  - docket
    - receipt (to cust)
    - closed docket
  - journal roll
- keyboard
  - keys
- scales
- weight screen
- scanner
- operator display screen (O.D.S.)

Bench
- belt
- PLU list — Price-look-up list
- dividers
- fishtail
- shelves
  - under bench in kiosk
    - chain
    - padlock
    - gun
      - punch gun
      - pricing gun
      - special gun
  - under bench at checkout
    - price tag
      - sticker
      - kimble cards
      - kimble tags
  - under drawer
- bag racks
- plastic bags
- belt pedal
- belt

Therefore the different parts of the register, including the 'scanner' are linked to the store computer. Originally 'the register' referred to a cash register - a machine which included keys, a drawer or till, and which produced a docket. With computerisation, the term 'register' now includes: the scanner; the scales; the C.D.S.; the weight screen (which displays the price per kilo and the calculated item price); and the Operator Display Screen (O.D.S.) which displays the price of items as they are scanned and also 'error codes' (computer commands); the keyboard; the printer; and the drawer or till. These systems are linked to each other and to the store computer (Figure 8).

The 'bench' is defined as: the belt, on which items are placed before scanning; the bench itself, onto which items are placed after scanning; the fishtail, used to separate two orders when packing, and also to separate 'soft' items from the rest of an order; and shelves. The shelves under the bench usually have a collection of price tags, while those under the drawer have spare docket rolls and 'the bag' on the top shelf, and cleaning equipment and waste paper bin on the lower shelf. A bell which is used to attract attention, is attached to the shelves below the bench, whilst the belt pedal is on the floor below.

Detachable bagracks are clipped to the bench in front of the scanner. If the checkout operator has a packer, the bagrack is detached from this position, replaced by 'the board', and moved into position at the end of the bench. The PLU list (Price Look Up list - Appendix B) is Sellotaped to the bench top:

> This gives the item number (for fresh produce).
> The numbers are changing all the time (L).

Dividers, wooden blocks used to separate orders on the belt, are placed near the belt. Each checkout has a 'door' which is closed when the checkout is not in use. When open, items are displayed on the door in vertical holders.

FIGURE 8

Customer Display Screen, Operator Display Screen and Keyboard

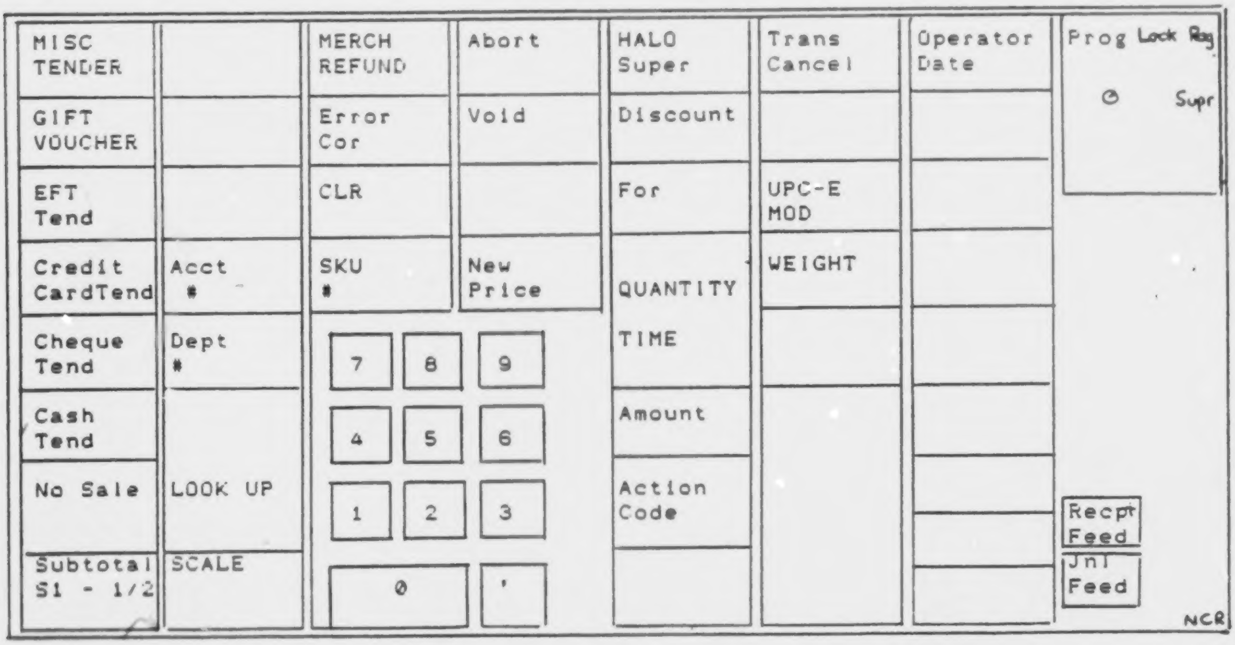
Customer Display Screen

Comm	Alert	Train	Total	Subtotal	R/A	Qty/Scale
Super	Progr/Diag	Void	%	Return	P.Bal	Staff

Operator's Display Screen

Change	Progr/Diag	Cred/Retn	Alert	Comm
Full	Super	%	Train Total	Re-entry
Paper	Not in file	P.Bal	Subtotal	R/A
Error	Dept/Price	Staff	Void	Qty/Scale

Keyboard


MISC TENDER
GIFT VOUCHER
EFT Tend
Credit CardTend
Cheque Tend
Cash Tend
No Sale
Subtotal S1 - 1/2
Acct #
Dept #
LOOK UP
SCALE
MERCH REFUND
Error Cor
CLR
SKU #
Abort
Void
New Price
7
8
9
4
5
6
1
2
3
0
'
HALO Super
Discount
For
QUANTITY
TIME
Amount
Action Code
Trans Cancel
UPC-E MOD
WEIGHT
Operator Date
Prog
Lock
Reg
Supr
Recpt Feed
Jnl Feed
NCR

Kiosk

The second site is the tobacco shop, also known as the kiosk, the smoke shop, the cage, or 11. The front of the tobacco shop is joined to the end of Checkout 10 by a laminated panel. The door into the kiosk opens from Checkout 10, just behind where the operator stands.

The kiosk (Figure 9) consists of glass display benches, front and back, above which, from about head height to the top of the kiosk, are glass display cabinets which contain vertical holders filled with individual packets of cigarettes for sale. At the far end of each display bench, between the glass top and the bottom of the overhead cabinets, are small glass shelving units. The front unit has four shelves of tobacco packets and the back unit has two shelves of cigarettes and one of tobacco.

Along the front of the two visible shelves runs metal 'stripping', on the outside of the glass, into which plastic numbers which indicate the prices, are slotted. The prices of brands 'on Special' are on 'flags' - large paper markers on which are printed the word 'SPECIAL' and the price of the item in felt pen (Appendix C). Names and prices of cartons are also indicated on the edges of shelves inside the kiosk for the operator's benefit.

The back bench of the kiosk consists of three shelves, none of which are visible from ouside, due to a large rack of magazines placed behind the kiosk. Together with a BIC display stand near Checkout 10, the displays cover the entire length of the kiosk (Figure 10). The top shelf holds cartons of cigarettes, whilst the middle shelf holds rows of cigarette cartons, grouped by brand and type, and a metal stand of Kodak films and flash bulbs. The bottom shelf stores the trolley chain, padlock, night vests for the trolley boys, spare product stands, a box containing loose packets of cigarettes and a box of used Process Service Accounts.

FIGURE 9

The Kiosk

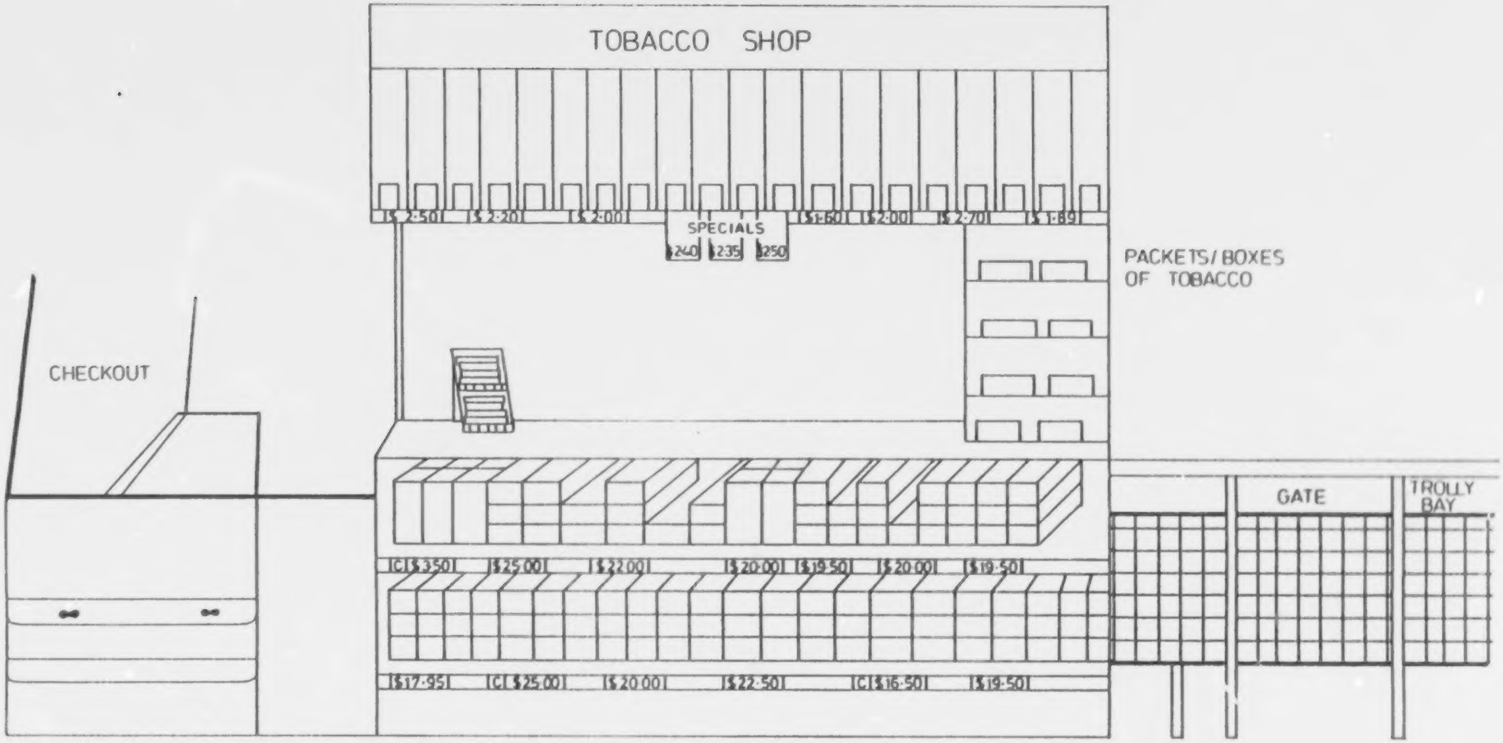
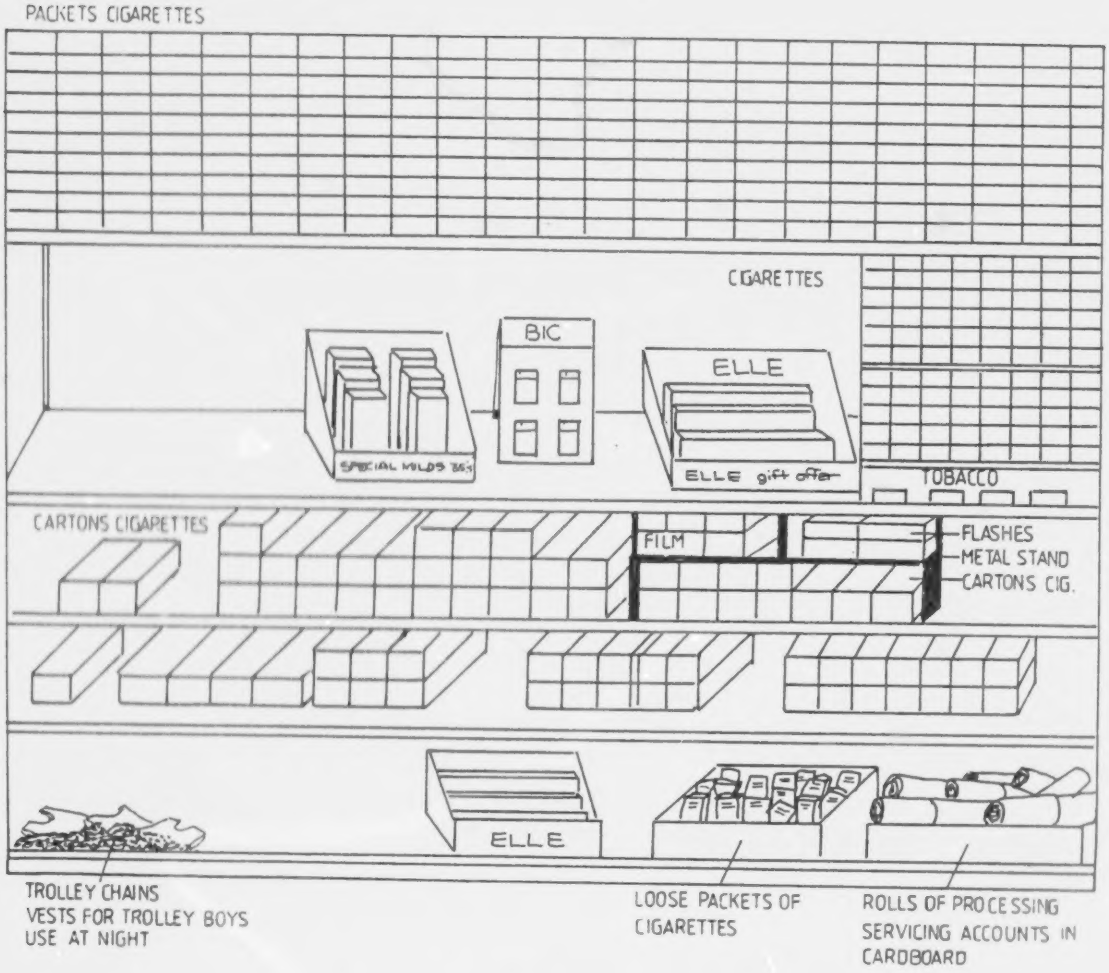

TOBACCO SHOP
$2·50
$2·20
$2·00
SPECIALS
$2·40
$2·35
$2·50
$1·60
$2·00
$2·70
$1·89
PACKETS/BOXES OF TOBACCO
CHECKOUT
C $33·50
$25·00
$22·00
$20·00
$19·50
$20·00
$19·50
$17·95
C $25·00
$20·00
$22·50
C $16·50
$19·50
GATE
TROLLY BAY

FIGURE 10

The Back of the Kiosk


PACKETS CIGARETTES
CIGARETTES
BIC
ELLE
SPECIAL MILDS 35's
ELLE gift ~~offer~~
TOBACCO
CARTONS CIGARETTES
FILM
FLASHES
METAL STAND
CARTONS CIG.
ELLE
TROLLEY CHAINS
VESTS FOR TROLLEY BOYS
USE AT NIGHT
LOOSE PACKETS OF
CIGARETTES
ROLLS OF PROCESSING
SERVICING ACCOUNTS IN
CARDBOARD

At the end of the kiosk, opposite the door, is a bench on which is a cash register, a non-scanning variety with drawer, display screen and keyboard, all in one. On the left of the register is a plastic box containing packets of photographs waiting to be collected by customers, while on the right are two pricing guns. Hanging from a hook below the cash register is a Kodak dispatch bag. The 'Kodak folder' which contains the Kodak Processing Envelopes and Kodak Processing Service Dealer Record Card, is on a shelf below.

Shelves

The third site is rather a collection of sites, to do with 'shelving'. Shelving may be carried out in the checkout area when the checkout operator is requested to 'do the door' or 'fill up the doors'. This involves filling the vertical holders of cigarettes on the doors of the checkouts. Shelves are also found above the belt of the checkout. Three sloping display-shelves containing vertical holders of chocolate bars. At the base of each row is a curved piece of 'stripping' into which plastic price numbers are inserted.

Checkout operators are also at times required to work in the store, which may mean helping out in grocery, variety, delicatessen, or dairy case departments. They are frequently asked to go to the store shelves for replacement items or to check prices. Shelves here are also marked with stripping, plastic numbers and item descriptions or 'flags'. Operators may also be required to 'tidy shelves', that is tidying discount books on the ends of checkouts and 'front end' shelves, along with shelving in the kiosk.

2. The actors

The second element of the culture is that of the social context, in particular the activities of the actors within that context.

The pilot study provided an overview of the store's organisational structure, which was clarified during Phase 2 of the research. The actors including store and non-store people are identified in Figure 11. The store staff are related to the areas of management, the store office, staff who work in the main part of the store, the stockman who works 'out the back', and the Front End staff. Non-store people include: customers, sales representatives and Head Office staff. Customers are also classified: the manager, other staff, friends, old people, children, rude customers and regulars.

Checkout operators 'operate' mainly at the Front End and are part of the Front End staff (Figure 12). The person in charge is the Front End Controller (F.E.C.), formerly known as the Checkout Supervisor. However the F.E.C. takes charge of the whole of the Front End, not just the checkouts. This is a very exacting and responsible position which involves: overseeing budgets; organising Front End staff, rosters, assessment and training; answering inquiries from checkout operators, other staff, customers and outside personnel; making announcements over the public address system; taking responsibility for the appearance of the staff and store at the Front End; plus security and staff accountability. If the store is busy the F.E.C. may open a checkout or help with packing. The Front End Controller is never still.

Also at the Front End are the packers. Only female staff are called packers because any male staff who pack are employed as trolley boys who only pack if it is very busy. The packers pack items into plastic bags and load them into the customer's trolley. Packers remain in this position until a checkout operator is needed, then they may be given training.

The F.E.C.

> believes the girls should get a feel for the place before they are trained. Also to see if they are going to stick around. It's the best way. That's how I was trained (S).

FIGURE 11

The Actors

- Management
  - Store Manager
    - The Manager
    - Boss
    - Bossman
  - Acting Manager
  - Point-of-sale Manager
  - Department Manager
    - Grocery
    - Fresh foods
    - Meat
    - Fresh produce
    - Deli
    - Dairy
    - Night fill
  - Trainee managers
    - Cadets
- Office
  - Office manager
  - Office clerks
- Store
  - Merchandisers
    - Merchandise Officer
    - Variety merchandiser
  - Night fillers
  - Sales Assistants
    - Variety
    - Deli
    - Fresh produce
- Out the back
  - Storeman - stockman
- Front End
  - Front End Controller
  - Checkout operator - see separate chart
  - Packers
  - Trolley boys
    - Check-out Operators
    - Trolley boys
- Customers
  - Other staff
  - Friends
  - Old people
  - Children
  - Rude customers
  - Regular customers

FIGURE 12

Actors at the Front End

- Front End Controller
- Checkout Operators
  - Permanent (Rostered half day off each fortnight)
    - Female
      - Senior
        - 2IC
        - (Over 20)
        - Late start
          - J
          - E
      - Junior
        - Under 20
        - Early start
          - A
          - L
          - S
  - Casual
    - Female
      - Week day
        - 9.30 start
        - 1.30
    - M or F
      - Thurs night — students
      - Saturday — students
- Packers
  - F.E.C.
  - 2IC
  - Acting 2IC
  - Check. Ops
  - Packers
  - Trolley boys
- Trolley boys

Trolley boys are employed to look after the trolleys first, but they also do other odd jobs, keep the place clean and tidy, and fetch boxes of plastic bags from 'out the back' every day. Trolley boys who have acted as packers may be given the opportunity to train as casual checkout operators for Thursday nights and Saturdays.

Checkout operators may be 'permanent' or 'casual'. The checkout operators who became the informants for this study are all permanent operators. They are all female. J. and E. are Seniors, identified as over 20 years and having 'late starts' in the morning (8.30am). A., L. and S. are all Juniors, that is, under 20 years and having 'early starts' (8.05am). The six casual operators during weekdays are all female and start at 9.30am or 1.30pm. Thursday night and Saturday casual staff are both male and female and many are students.

It was decided that the study would focus on the communication demands of the job of checkout operator, through studying the activities of the permanent operators, J., E., A., L., and S. These employees had, by the nature of their positions, been in the organisation for a period of time and would be familiar with the routines and patterns of the job. All agreed to participate in the study and became valued informants.

3. Activities and events

The third element of the social situation of the workplace is that of the activities and events which make up the organisation and routines of the supermarket. Some indication of the number and variety of daily activities in which the checkout operator is involved, when at the checkout (Site 1) is given in Figure 13. These activities are all part of what is known as 'operating'.

FIGURE 13

Daily Activities of Checkout Operators

Sign-on	Signs on starting time Signs 'slip' for bag Checks seal
Opening-up - in morning	Collect bag from office Check op. accountability sheet for checkout number Place drawer in checkout Put money in drawer Put bag racks in bench Switch on tower light
- after lunch	Collect drawer from holding cupboard at Service Desk
Operating	Scanning items Use of register (keyboard, ODS weight screen) Use of scales Receiving payment Giving change Use of PLU lists and flaps Requests for 'price please' 'exchange' Request 'change please' Clearance
Closing checkout	Morning tea - drawer left in register 'on lock' Afternoon tea - register 'on lock' Lunch - drawer taken to holding cupboard at Service Desk Evening - drawer to counting room - bag to office - sign off
Shelving	Stocking front shelves - in door - above belt Doing 'shrinkage' Stock returns Magazines 'Supermarket pricing' leaflets
Cleaning	Checkout (scanner, scales, bench) Shelves Front End Rubbish bins

Site 1 - The checkout

Checkout operators begin each day with an identifiable routine. The junior permanents (A, S or L) start at 8.05am, earlier than the other checkout operators who have a 'late' start, 8.30am. The early start is so that operators are in position in Security Checkouts 1 and 10 next to the store entrances when the store opens at 8.15am.

a) The routine of 'putting through an order'.

Activities involved with 'putting through an order' include: using the scanner; using the Operator Display Screen (O.D.S.); using the keyboard; using the drawer; using money; using the weight screen; using the PLU list (Price Look Up); using the 'flaps'; using the bell; using plastic bags; reading barcodes; using the Multistore Cheque Authorisation Card; using problem solving strategies and using spoken language. Together these comprise an identifiable routine, that of 'putting through an order'. The communication requirements of each activity will be discussed later.

The routine of 'putting through an order' begins when the customer arrives at the checkout. The handling of the plastic bags, that is taking a new bag and placing the handles over the hooks of the bag rack, signals the beginning of the routine, which is also marked by the ritual greeting "Hi! How are you today?"

Most customers appear to group items prior to scanning so that they will be packed together, with cold or frozen items placed together first on bench closest to scanner. Checkout operators vary in how they scan. When S. has only one customer and a packer she takes each item as it is placed on the belt by the customer, with her right hand, positions the barcode so that it can be 'read' as she passes the item over the scanner, in a quick flowing movement, into her left hand. The item is then pushed straight down to the packer at the end of the checkout. At other times when there is a packer S. takes items in groups which belong together such as all bottles or cans, scans these and pushes them to one side. Usually soft items and large items (chips, bread, biscuits, paper towels and large boxes) are pushed to one side near the fishtail and packed together or placed on top of other goods in the bag.

If S. does her own packing, she packs each item with her left hand, straight into the bag in front of her. Sometimes she scans several items, categorising them as she packs e.g. frozen items together, then tins, bottles and breakables last. These are packed with both hands. She pulls the handles of the plastic bags from the hooks of the racks, back to front, brings the handles together, then lifts the bag over to the customer with her left hand. (See Figure 14 for names of items).

> When we're trained to pack we are told to pack certain things together - cold, smellies, cleaning products, fruit & veges. It doesn't matter what goes in first but they're packed in groups of similar items (S).

L. agrees, "That's how I'd like my groceries to be packed so that's how I do it myself." She usually packs each item as she scans even if it is a large order.

Items from the Fresh Produce Department are weighed and priced at the checkout by the operators. They put the fruit or vegetables on to the scales and key in the PLU (Price Look Up) number. Both the weight of the item and the calculated price appear on the weight screen (and ODS). The PLU list (Appendix B) is a list of unpriced fresh produce items and their codes.

> Previously bags of potatoes, onions, apples etc. had prices on and were all ready at Fruit & Veg. Now they are to be 'put through' using the PLU number (S).

After scanning all items for the customer, the checkout operator punches 'Subtotal'. The checkout operator than tells the customer the total, collects the money, punches the 'amount tendered' key,

FIGURE 14

Classification of Items

- sold (in an order)
  - Variety items
    - living (plants)
    - non-living (clothes, stationery, household, etc)
  - look up items
    - fruit
    - vegetables
  - cold items
    - dairy products
    - meat - meat hall - meat products
    - deli
    - frozen
  - confect. - confectionary - lollies
  - smellies
    - detergents
    - soaps
    - soap powder
- price
  - normal price
  - specials
  - Dollar Dazzlers 4 for $3
- scan
  - Scannable items
  - Unscannable items
- code
  - Barcode
  - Not bar coded
- unsold
  - Stock
  - returns
    - stock returns
    - loose stock
    - damaged stock
    - shrinkage
    - unsold magazines

then the 'cash tend' key. The total amount and the amount of change is displayed on both the O.D.S. and C.D.S.. The drawer opens automatically when 'change' shows on the screens. The operator puts the money in the drawer, takes out the change, collects the receipt and gives both the change and receipt to the customer. The handing of the filled bags to the customer and preparation of new bags, together with the obligatory farewell "Thanks" signal the end of the routine.

b) The routine of 'operating'.

Other activities which are also part of the checkout operator's routine of 'operating' include: requesting a price; item exchange; check change; transaction cancel; change docket or journal roll; wiping the bench top after messy items (ice cream, bottle with fruit juice on it).

When a customer tenders an amount to pay for the order, the coins are placed in the till and the notes are put into 'the clip' (top left of drawer under the scales). The change is taken out of the till and only then are the notes put away. Occasionally problems arise and the checkout operator must ring the bell and call to the F.E.C. "Check change please" or "Check my change".

> There are two different reasons why you would say this... if you've made a mistake in the amount tendered, like if the customer gave you $20 and you accidentally keyed in $200 and saw $190 change... you can't void it out (S).
>
> The other reason you would call 'check my change please' is... if the customer hasn't got enough money and has to go to the bank to get more (S).

c) Routines for closing drawers.

The procedures for closing the drawers at morning tea, lunch and in the evening, also form a routine. The procedures are also termed 'close' or 'go out'. At morning tea, another checkout operator arrives at the checkout with her own drawer. She stands silently, at the register until the operator has finished putting the order through, then she says "Five". The only response from the operator is her removal of her drawer insert from the register. She places 'the bag' on top, goes to Checkout 5, opens the drawer there, places her insert into the drawer and the empty bag on the shelf below the printer. The register is then placed 'on lock' and the operator goes for tea.

The procedure for closing the drawer at lunchtime is different. The operator may ask "Can I go to lunch?" or the F.E.C. or 2IC will ask someone to relieve, sometimes checking first, "You're going to lunch aren't you?" (2IC to S). In either case the procedure begins with the punching in of the managerial numbers (3 digits) plus the 'operator date' key. The drawer opens and the 'closed docket' pops up from the printer. This shows 'closed', the managerial number, time and date. The drawer and bag go 'into holding', a locked cupboard under the back bench of the service desk. The operator then goes to lunch.

On her return, the operator asks 'whoever is on' at the service desk for her drawer by saying her managerial number. The drawer is taken from the holding cupboard and the operator checks the till number and the seal against the number written on the back of the 'closed docket'. The F.E.C. pulls the seal out of the drawer with a pair of pliers and directs the operator to 'open up' a checkout.

When 'closing off' at night all the money from the drawer goes into 'the bag'. On Fridays the drawer and the bag are taken to the counting room, the money is counted and the amount is written on the slip which is placed in the plastic 'window' of 'the bag'. The money in 'the bag' is taken to the office where a seal is placed on the bag and the seal number is written on the slip (Appendix D). The bag is left at office and the empty drawer is taken to the counting room and left there.

d) Other routines.

These involve the procedures for using the Order Change Form, the Delivery Form and the procedure for a 'clearance'.

The procedure for using the 'Delivery Form' (Appendix E) begins when an order has been put through. As the order is packed, the tops of the plastic bags are tied **except** for bags containing cold items which the customer must take with them. The operator 'rings off', that is totals the cost of the items and gives change. She keeps the docket, then fills in the delivery form, a carbon copy of which remains in the book. The docket and delivery form are stapled to one of the bags which are then placed on a trolley at the front of the store.

A 'clearance' occurs when two office girls arrive at the checkout with a large box trolley. Nothing is said but the operator knows to key in three numbers, press the 'Cash Tend' key to open the drawer and 'Jnl Feed' key to wind on the docket. The office girl takes out most of the notes and signs the docket. The docket and folded money are placed into a cloth bag. "So they know it's my money. Whose register it's from" (J).

The bag is put into the trolley through the opening in the top.

> This (clearance) is done about four times a day or when the checkout operator calls for a clearance. There are more on Thursday and Friday 'cause we get more money (J).

Site 2 - The kiosk

The operation of the kiosk is generally the responsibility of the 2IC, though ultimately, since it is part of the Front End, it comes under the supervision of the F.E.C.

> Permanents are usually put in the smoke shop because we know how to do more things (J).

Checkout 10, which includes the kiosk, has many activities in common with the other checkouts, for example: putting through an order; ordering change; and clearance; however some routines are different.

> If you're on checkout 10 you don't have to clean checkouts and do other things (J).

a) The morning routine.

The morning routine at the kiosk begins when the 2IC starts work at the Front End at about 8.05am. She unlocks the kiosk door, places the drawer insert into the kiosk register and puts money into the drawer. The 2IC then goes to the vault or 'vault house' out 'the back', unlocks the door and removes two or three large boxes filled with cartons of cigarettes. These were taken from the kiosk display cabinets the previous evening and placed in the vault for security. The boxes are taken on a loading trolley to the kiosk ready for the checkout operator to re-shelve.

Meanwhile the permanent arrives at checkout 10 at 8.05am on Mondays, 8.10am other weekdays and 'opens up'. She then moves into the kiosk, lifts out the grille 'gates' from the front and back of the kiosk, and places them on metal holders above the middle of the kiosk. The display benches and cabinets are also placed into position.

The tobaccos and cigarettes are replaced in the small display cabinets and glass benches.

> These get taken down at night so that if someone did break in they couldn't put their hand through the gate and steal them (J).

The operators must also 'operate' on Checkout 10 while 'opening up' the kiosk. They use their own drawers on Checkout 10 while putting through an order. Cartons and cigarettes are never scanned, instead the price is keyed in from the price sticker or 'special' sticker.

b) Doing returns.

A second routine at Checkout 10 is 'doing returns'. This involves tearing off the front page of unsold magazines, whenever new magazines come in. At 9.30am the F.E.C. places a bundle of 'T.V. Week' and 'House & Garden' in front of S. at the kiosk, nothing is said.

> These are the returns. You tear off the front page for a refund. The reps from the company that sells them come in and count the tops of the pages with the date on and they credit you for the ones you haven't sold and you get that off the next lot (S).

c) The list.

The operator or 2IC does 'the list' every morning "as soon as you can" (L). This is a list (written on a spare piece of cardboard or the back of a spare cigarette carton, flattened out) of the number and brands of cartons needed to fill up the glass display cabinets on the front and back of the kiosk. This list can be used again with the previous pencil numbers rubbed out, or a new list can be written, listing only those brands which are needed for that day. More cartons are ordered on Thursdays and Fridays as these are the busiest days.

The operator decides on the number of cartons necessary and when the list is complete, rings the bell, holds up the card and calls "the list". The 2IC takes the list to the vault and gets the required cartons as the operator cannot leave the checkout/kiosk.

d) Pricing.

When items requested on 'the list' arrive at the kiosk they have to be priced. The cartons of cigarettes are taken from the cardboard boxes and priced individually using a pricing gun or 'punch gun'. The operator sets the price on the gun to accord with the prices on 'stripping' on the shelves inside the kiosk.

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Also single packets of cigarettes are taken from cartons and priced as needed to fill the vertical cigarette holders. A 'special' gun is used to mark items 'on special', according to the 'flags' or special display signs (Appendix C).

e) The Count.

'Doing the count' or 'doing the stock' is done every day except Tuesday, usually not before 12.00. The stockbook (Front End Book) is kept at the Service Desk and brought to the kiosk by the 2IC. It is used to record the quantities of cigarettes, tobacco and Tally Ho papers in the kiosk.

> I'm not actually ordering, I'm telling the supervisors what stock is here. Then they know what to order and the nightfill people know what to do (S).

The operator writes the number of each brand and type next to the name listed in the stockbook, in a column under the correct date.

A discussion of numeracy competencies involved in doing the list and the count is presented later in 'numeracy events'.

f) Photographs.

A routine specific to the kiosk is that of handling films and photographic equipment. When a customer requires a film to be developed, the operator fills in a Kodak Processing Envelope and also the Processing Service Dealer Record Card (Appendices F & G). The film is placed into the envelope, sealed and placed into the Dispatch Bag to await daily collection by a Kodak employee. When the developed photographs arrive back at the kiosk, the Processing Services Account is checked against the figures on the Kodak Processing Envelope. The Processing Services Account is then put into a small box which is on the shelf next to the register in the kiosk. These will be collected by the 2IC.

g) Afternoon routine.

At about 4.30pm each afternoon, either the operator on Checkout 10 or another operator 'takes down the stock' in the kiosk. This involves getting 2 or 3 large cardboard boxes from the vault and placing all the cartons, except for two rows on the bottom, into them. The tobaccos from the front side cases are taken out and placed on the shelf beside the remaining cigarettes. The large boxes are taken by the operator or 2IC to the vault where they are stored for the night, while the pricing guns, if still in the kiosk, are returned to the Office, for safe keeping overnight.

Immediately before the store closes, the operator takes the 'gates' down from where they have been stored, and 'puts the gates up' in front of the front and back benches. The 2IC locks the door of the kiosk and all keys are taken to the office for the night.

Checkout operators do not like working 'on 10' or 'the cage', because this is the busiest area at the front end and they do not have a packer. Also this checkout is for 8 items or less so most customers are in a hurry and grow impatient if they are kept waiting.

> There is more responsibility. Most checkout operators don't like 10 (J).

Site 3 - Shelves

The third site is actually a collection of sites in which the checkout operators are required to 'operate' in relation to shelves. This involves several activities which vary according to the site: checkout area; kiosk, or in the store.

a) Shelving in the checkout area.

This is usually preceded by the direction 'Do the door' or 'Fill up the doors'. The operator in question takes a piece of cardboard (from a cigarette carton) and goes round all the doors at the Front End, making a list of brands of cigarettes and numbers required to fill the shelves. The list is taken to the kiosk, from where the stock is collected and placed in a plastic bag. The operator then takes this around and fills the shelves. Similarly, confectionary such as chocolate bars and lifesavers, are kept in the kiosk for stocking the Front End shelves. The ordering of confectionary and magazines is the responsibility of the F.E.C. however the operators are sometimes involved in the stocktake.

Operators are also required to keep the shelves around the checkout area tidy. This includes all shelves on the front of each checkout, plus the 'discount books' on the ends of Checkouts 1 and 3. 'Shelving magazines' however is a different activity. For example L. had no customers and so the F.E.C. directed, "You can open some of these boxes for me" (indicating boxes which had been brought from receiving). L. went to Checkout 2 (which is never used) took the magazines from the boxes and priced each magazine using a punch-gun. S. explained that the magazines already have their price printed on the top but they needed a store sticker as well "So we know its from the store" (S). If new stock is being shelved the F.E.C. will consult a plan of the shelves and direct the operator.

> All the Cosmopolitan go here. Family Circle here. Dolly will have to go back up on the kiosk with Cleo. We should have enough to go out on all the stands (S).

b) Shelving in the store.

The main activity is 'showing stock' or 'facing up the stock'. Items already on the shelf are moved forward and new items are placed at the back of shelf. This also enables items to be seen and reached easily. Sometimes items require pricing, in which case items are taken from the trolley or boxes and priced using the punch-gun.

Operators are frequently requested to go to the shelves in the store in order to 'Do the stock' (put away loose items) or to replace items. To 'do the stock', the operator collects any damaged stock, exchanged items, or items which have been left by customers, from each checkout. The items are taken to Checkout 2 where they are sorted. Damaged or imperfect stock is taken 'out the back' to receiving where it is placed in large plastic containers. The other stock is returned to the shelves. S. categorises the items so that she will start at the right side of the store and work her way down to the left end.

> I figure out which ones go together and do them all together. I start at the right end of the store and work to the left. I know where the section is. Then I match the name and size (S).

L. on the other hand starts from the left side and works across. L. knows where particular types of items are shelved in the store. She goes to the section and finds the same type of item as those which need shelving.

Operators are also asked to 'go to receiving' and 'do the load'. This involves the operator going to receiving and collecting large boxes of cigarettes from the storeman. These are then taken, with the 'load sheet' to the vault. The 'load sheet' is about three pages of computer printout which list the brand and type of cigarette cartons which have been delivered. After finishing the load, checking and putting away the cartons, the operator tidies the shelves in the vault, locks the door and takes the load sheet to the service desk. Items listed on the load sheet are ticked to show that the correct number were delivered and stored. Any items not ticked are pointed out to the F.E.C.

From the preceding discussion it can be seen that the nature of the job of the checkout operator is much more complex than originally envisaged.

CHAPTER 5

PATTERNS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

1. The checkout operator as a user of sign systems.

As shown in Chapter 1 communication may be viewed from a semiotic perspective. Eco's (1979) definition that "a sign (is) everything that on the grounds of all previously established social convention, can be taken as **something standing for something else**" (p. 15), is particularly pertinent to the supermarket in which the sign systems of sound, colour, size, shape and design have signification in the particular social situation in which they occur. Customers waiting at a supermarket checkout may be aware of the tower lights flashing or bells ringing but unless it is their checkout operator who is ringing the bell, not much notice is taken - these sign systems do not have meaning for them. However these sign systems are most important to the checkout operator and in many instances signs take the place of spoken or written language.

Sound as a sign system.

One of the most pervasive sign systems in the supermarket is the sound of bells. Checkout operators use the bell for a variety of reasons; for example, one ring is to attract the attention of the F.E.C. or 2IC. This might be followed by holding up an item plus "Price please"; or holding up a receipt roll or docket roll, with no speech, indicating that a new one is required. Two rings of the bell indicate that a packer is required, whereas three rings means that the queue is too long - open up another checkout. Sound also doubles as a checking device. If an item scans correctly there is a single short beep, however if there is a problem scanning the item a long beep sounds.

> I don't take much notice of the lights. I listen to the noise. It beeps if it scans (J).

Colour as a sign system.

The use of colour is most important as colours denote different messages depending on the context. Red flashing lights may be used in the store to indicate specials but in the checkout area small red and green lights on the scanner show whether an item has scanned successfully. The checkout operator uses the tower light (white) to indicate that the checkout is open but flashes the light to request change.

When the office staff 'do a clearance' the office girl signs the docket with her name using red biro:

> You can't sign in any other colour. Anything that will go in a journal has to be written in red (J).

When working in the kiosk a red felt pen is used to mark 'special' flags whereas a blue felt pen is used to cross out the barcodes and mark the ends of cigarette cartons when they are on special (to remind checkout operators not to scan them). This is one example of colour being used as a memory aid. Further, the majority of the checkout operators (L. J. S. E.) stated that they use colour primarily to locate particular keys on the keyboard and to locate cigarette cartons in the kiosk: "you get to know the colours" (L).

There are many examples of colour being used for ease of identification. The end of the receipt roll is indicated by purple lines. Cheque Authorisation Cards are red and Staff Discount Cards are green. The staff sign-on books are also colour coded for easy recognition: orange - grocery staff; green - fruit and vegetables; blue - checkout operators.

L. also uses colour to differentiate the size and price of eggs, using the colour of the print rather than the alpha-numeric text. Similarly she uses the colour of the print on the wrappers of coin rolls to identify the denomination of the coins. To a lesser extent she uses the size of the roll, for example to tell the difference between the brown print for $20 of $1 coins and 50c of 1c coins. J. says that she uses colour to identify notes but looks at the size of the coin rolls.

Use of size, shape and design.

When shelving, colour is used to some extent, however shape, size, weight and overall design aid matching and identification of particular items.

> Dairy is harder 'cause there's a lot more things. There's more variety, so things take a bit longer to find. Cheeses are difficult (L).

When shelving magazines, reference to the overall cover design and colour is more obvious. L. commented that she just goes by the picture on the front, as that is the main thing she sees. Illustrations are also used when checking to see if an item is on special:

> It is quicker to flick through the pages (of a catalogue) and look for the picture... I don't really need to read the name (L).

Sign systems denoted through behaviour.

A further example of the role of a sign system occurs when other staff members arrive at the checkout. Firstly, this may be the appearance of an office girl with a large box-trolley which denotes that it is time for a 'clearance' when most of the notes are taken from the till. Secondly, another checkout operator may arrive with her drawer which indicates that she is relieving the current operator. In each situation nothing is said, the presence of the other person is sufficient indication of what is expected. Similarly, at the kiosk, a bundle of magazines may be placed in front of the operator and again nothing is said, however the operator infers that she is to 'do the returns'. Finally, the fluffing out of a new plastic bag and placing it in the bag racks signals the end of 'putting through one order' and the beginning of the next order.

Summary.

Success in communication therefore depends on the ability of the checkout operator to respond correctly to the sign systems by making predictions or inferences based on the underlying rules known to participants within the particular culture of the supermarket. Outsiders may only be aware of a bell ringing or a flashing light, whereas to insiders these signs stand for something else, there is signification (Eco, 1979).

2. The checkout operator and literacy events.

By viewing the literacy environment of the workplace as language in context as suggested in Chapter 1, it is possible to account for the wide ranging effects of social and cultural factors on language and its uses. The literacy event, as defined by Heath (1982) is a useful conceptual tool with which to examine the actual form and function of literacy in the workplace. A literacy event is "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath, 1982, p.93). The literacy environment of the supermarket consists of:

- print materials available in the environment;
- ways in which employees use print in their on-going activities;
- the individual's literacy competencies.

Contextualised print in the literacy environment.

Reading and writing within the culture of the supermarket reflects the particular social situation. Print in the form of signs, labels, forms, or lists, is embedded in the context in which it occurs, with the environment and the purpose or function of the print determining the meaning. For example when the checkout operator is shelving or going for a replacement item, the use of such sign systems as shape, colour, size and weight, supports the reading of the actual print on the label. Similarly at the kiosk, print is only one of a variety of sign systems used to locate different brands of cigarettes. Even the 'safety spotlight' notices in the staffroom derive their meaning from the situation, whether they are about safe lifting practices or the importance of wiping spills on the floor.

Very little print is decontextualised, that is independent from the situation. Some of the operators commented that the training manuals were difficult to read because of this.

> The reading that we did was irrelevant to what we really had to know when we got here... A lot of girls couldn't work it out because they'd never sort of done anything inside the store before (L).

Ways in which employees use reading and writing

Checkout operators use reading and writing skills continuously as an integral part of their on-going activities. Figure 15 gives an indication of the range of print in context.

a) Reading and writing as sources of information.

Notices are placed in the staffroom regarding social functions, jobs in other stores, safety, the gym. Other notices feature 'error codes' or rosters of starting times and holidays.

> L. checks the roster on Friday for her starting time on Monday. For the starting times on other days she checks whenever she happens to be in the staffroom.

Communication strategies used often reflect the social situation rather than individual competencies (Green, 1988). The view of the workplace as a culture means that reading and writing may be just one of a range of communication systems used. An operator may read the notices in the staffroom or alternately may be given the information through conversations with other staff members.

FIGURE 15

Uses of Reading and Writing

- At Checkout
  - Forms
    - Delivery
    - Change order
    - Merchandise refund
    - Slip
  - Lists
    - PLU list x 2
    - Operating list - produce dept
      - error codes
      - grocery dept guide
    - Cheque authorisation card
      - do not cash list
    - The 'list'
    - Specials list
  - Register receipts
- At Kiosk
  - Stock order book - Front end book
  - Lead sheet - Cigarette sheet
  - Kodak processing envelopes
  - Kodak processing service dealer record card
  - Processing services account
  - Specials list
- Service Desk
  - Front End Book - stock order book
  - Operator assessment form
  - Operator accountability worksheet
  - Roster-starting times
- Office
  - Sign-on book
  - Store expense book
- Staff-Room
  - Barcodes
  - Error codes
  - Roster

As previously noted, safety notices are contextualised and often have illustrations to aid meaning. Error codes are often learnt by rote during training, or through repetition on-the-job. So although notices are important sources of information, reading competency is not essential to gain that information.

Information may also be presented in the form of lists. A customer wrote a cheque for her order and gave S. her plastic cheque authorisation card (CAC). S. referred to her CAC list to check "she has written enough cheques that haven't bounced." Checking the details on a personal cheque or the details on the Multistore Cheque Authorisation Card against a list, involves careful, accurate, scanning of the list for alpha-numeric symbols, as well as careful decoding of personal details. Operators at the checkouts also refer to the Price Look Up (PLU) lists (Appendix B) which list fresh produce, the codes and prices.

> Previously bags of potatoes, onions, apples and things had prices on and were all ready at Fruit and Veg. Now they are to be 'put through' using the PLU number (S).

Similarly, reference is made to the operating lists,'the flaps', for information about unpriced items, error codes and guide to departments (Appendices H and I). Usually operators say they know the keys or lists (PLU or flaps) by heart, yet they still refer to them. This appears to be an automatic checking strategy. For example, L. checks the docket to see if two tins of dog food scanned correctly. To do this she uses her finger to scan down the names of items until she finds the ones she needs. L. says she uses the PLU lists once or twice a day "for odd fruit that doesn't come in often."

> I used to scan right down the list in alphabetical order, but you get to know where everything is so you can look straight at it (L).

b) Reading and writing to record information.

Again lists may be used. For example when ordering stock 'the

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count'; and doing 'the list' at the kiosk.

> L. goes to the kiosk. She is writing up a new list of cigarettes in biro on the back of a carton. She is copying the names of cartons on the shelves.

The number required is written beside each brand in pencil. 'Doing the load' involves checking lists. This time 'the load sheet' is a computer printout which lists the brands and types of cigarette cartons which have been delivered. As S. unpacks the cigarette cartons from the boxes, she checks them off with a tick next to the name on the computer sheet. To do this she scans the list of names, some of which are quite similar (Winfield Ultra Mild, Winfield Mild, Winfield Menthol Mild). Thus care must be taken in order to avoid confusion. Knowledge of alphabetical order and familiarity with computer printouts is essential. Lists are also used when 'getting the specials' from other departments, however the operators write the list by hand from verbal instructions (Appendix J). They may ask for clarification but are usually expected to know the items.

At the checkout, forms are used to record information. These include the merchandise refund form, a special docket for putting an order on account, and delivery forms (Appendix E).

> Following a request "Can I have another delivery form please?" the F.E.C. gives a block of forms to the operator. She fills in the date, the name and address of the customer, the number of bags and the value of the order.
>
> Whoever is spare (anyone not on a checkout who sees it, or you ask them) writes on the bag with black felt pen the last two numbers from the number on the delivery form, 83, the number of bags, 3, and the number of the checkout, 10 (L).

Operators at the kiosk are also required to fill out forms for film processing, the Processing Services Account and the Dealer Record Card (Appendices G and H). This writing is also performed in context on-the-job. When listing brands of cigarettes or confectionary, the items are usually present or reference may be made to information on the stripping. When filling in forms for film processing or home delivery, the customer supplies details including spelling out their name and address.

c) Reading and writing to request action.

At the checkout, the 'change order form' (Appendix E) is used to request change. The total amount is written at the bottom and the operator's name and management number at the top. This requires facility with alpha-numeric symbols and estimation (see Numeracy).

> The amount you order will depend on how much money you have in your till. You can't order more change than the notes you have in your till (E).

d) Reading and writing for identification.

i. Personal identification.

At the start of each shift operators sign on at the office, writing their name and starting time in the blue folder 'Service Perm' (Appendix K). After collecting her drawer each operator identifies herself at the office by giving her managerial number. The office girl then gives her 'the bag'.

> L. checks the seal, that it isn't broken and that the number on it is the same as the one written on her slip (identification slip in clear window of 'the bag').

At the end of the shift the operators close the registers by removing the drawer and placing the money into 'the bag' which is sealed.

> J. writes the seal number on her slip and signs it. She places the slip into the window of the bag.

The bag is handed in at the office and the operator signs off in the 'Service Perm' folder or 'Sign on Book', by writing the time under the day, in line with her name. Again facility with alpha-numeric symbols and the layout of forms is necessary.

ii. The identification of keys on the keyboard.
Operators use several strategies when operating at the checkout. When using the keyboard (Figure 8, p.32) A. says she knows the keys but if she wants to check she looks at the words most of which are abbreviated. Reading abbreviations is also required when using the telephone in different departments (F.E. = Front End, MTR = Management).

iii. The identification of items.
Due to the similarity of some items, the operators have to be extremely precise when decoding. Instances include, going for a replacement item. L. takes the item with her, otherwise it would be necessary to carefully check the brand name, type, size or weight. Similarly, when replacing loose stock or checking prices, the operators check the labels against those on the shelves. Magazines are also shelved by matching names or cover designs.

Individual literacy competencies.
In describing literacy events it is possible to demonstrate two aspects of reading and writing. Firstly, reading and writing skills are used for a variety of purposes (Goodman, 1984) and secondly, different competencies are involved. Viewed from a language in context perspective (as discussed in Chapter 1), literacy in the supermarket involves using written language which is firmly embedded in the social context. The field is language in the written form related to the trading environment of the supermarket. The tenor is largely one of authority, such as forms, lists, and notices devised by management to ensure efficiency in the workplace. Lastly the mode involves various competencies in both reading and writing (Figure 16).

Although checkout operators are able to use contextual cues for many of the reading and writing tasks on-the-job, they still require the ability to decode accurately, scan lists, match labels and alpha-numeric symbols, read abbreviations and computer printouts, fill in forms and accurately record information given orally.

FIGURE 16
Literacy Competencies

- READING
  - Reading in context
    - Labels
    - Notices
    - Signs
  - De-contextualised reading
    - Training manual
  - Scanning lists
    - Price look Up
    - Cheque authorise
    - Computer printout
  - Decoding
    - Names of customers
    - Labels
  - Alphabetical order
    - CAC list
    - Computer printout
  - Abbreviations
    - F.E. M.T.R.
    - E.F.T. C.L.R.
- WRITING
  - Fill out forms
    - (See Figure 18)
  - Checking stock
    - The list
    - Load sheet
    - The count
  - Getting specials
    - List from verbal
    - Request

Interpretative summary

In studying the literacy environment of the supermarket, the researcher was able to describe in detail the actual print materials used by the checkout operators; the purposes for which print was used; and the individual checkout operator's strategies for using print. It was found that there are more literacy events which call for use of appropriate literacy competencies than occasions for extended reading and writing. Furthermore, it is evident from the comment made by L. that the reading expected by the trainer during pre-service training courses:

- is perceived as being 'difficult' because it is decontextualised;
- appears to be irrelevant to the actual workplace experience.

This corroborates evidence previously cited in Chapter 3 about the mismatch between literacy demands in school or training and workplace actuality.

> There are some substantial differences between students and workers in literacy demands faced, literacy competency exhibited, and literacy strategies employed (Mikulecky, 1981, p. 176).

3. The checkout operator and numeracy events.

Perhaps the most obvious skill of the checkout operator is the ability to handle money. We are all aware that the operator takes our money and gives us change. However we may not be aware of other numeracy competencies and strategies which may be employed during what may be termed numeracy events. These can be equated with literacy events in that numeracy events are contextualised and included in on-going activities. The alpha-numeric skills required by checkout operators are listed in Figure 17.

Counting is usually quite straight forward when doing 'returns' which involves counting the front pages of magazines; or when counting money from 'the bag' into the drawer on Monday mornings.

FIGURE 17

Alpha-numeric Skills

- Rdg/punching in
  - Keyboard
  - Number pad
  - Barcodes
- Rdg/matching
  - Computer
    - O.D.S.
    - C.D.S.
    - Weight screen
  - Print
    - Flaps - Dept no & price
    - PLU list
    - Item - barcode
    - Numbers in stripping
    - Check seal
- Rdg/wrtg number
  - Delivery form
  - Change form - slip
  - The count
  - Stockbook
  - The list
  - Kodak forms
- NUMERACY
  - Estimation
    - Fruit & veg prices
    - Check prices
    - Check keying in
    - Check money (see below)
    - Knowledge of metric sizes
  - Counting
    - Returns
    - The Count
    - Stock order
    - The list
    - Money (see below)
  - Averaging
    - No. cartons in kiosk
    - Use of stock book
  - Use of money
    - Counting money given
    - Counting out change in multiples
    - Checking 'float'
    - Clearance

However when counting money received from a customer, the checkout operator adopts different strategies depending on whether she is at a checkout or the kiosk. At the checkout J. counts the notes first, then the coins from the largest to the smallest, whereas at the kiosk J. counted the coins into piles, then counted up "10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and $1 makes $1.50" so she could more easily check the amount tendered. When counting out change J. usually gives the notes first then coins:

> "Five, seven, eight, ten, twelve, thirteen".
> Gives ($5 + $2 + $1) + (10c + 2c + 1c)

but on other occasions J. says "That's 32 thanks" as she gives the whole amount (32c) with the docket into the customer's hand, without counting it out. Another strategy adopted by operators is to use the least possible number of coins to save having to order change.

> When I'm getting out change to give to a customer say $12.65, I get out $10 + $2, the one 50c, a 10 and a 5, rather than three 20s and a 5, to give the least amount of change coins. This saves my change (L).

Counting is also required when 'doing the count' or ordering stock in the kiosk. Again different strategies are used.

> I know that 4 cartons fill one row on the bench. So if there's 3 cartons missing on 3 rows, side by side, you know there are 3 to go on one pile so 3 rows of 3 equals 9 cartons needed (L).

When 'doing the load' S. counts the cartons in two's. She knows that five cartons fit across the width of the large box, so two rows means ten cartons.

> All you've gotta do is check that what's on the load sheet is the same as what's in the box. Then all you've gotta do is count it as you take it out and check it off (S).

Descriptive summary

By systematically observing the checkout operators it was found that although they use literal skills of counting on a few occasions, more often they apply other solution strategies. Information is transferred in various quantitative representations which are adopted as time saving, labour saving or checking devices.

Decoding numbers and the strategies used varies according to the use of the number. As J. says "If some items won't scan you can just key in the barcode and punch the LOOK Up key."

> Some items for example eggs, I know off by heart, so I key in the barcode from memory. I don't have to look (L).
>
> I can usually key in the numbers and not look at the keyboard. I only do it with the barcode though. It will only come up 'error' if you do it wrong, or 'not on file' (J).
>
> If it (an item) won't scan and you know the actual price already, you can just key in the department number plus the department key and the price number with the Amount Action Code key (S).

Several examples of problem solving strategies used by checkout operators when items do not scan are presented in Figure 18. Usually decoding is combined with use of the keyboard (Figure 8 p.32). S. says she rarely looks at the keyboard as she knows it but when she does, she looks at colour and name "to be sure." However J. just keys in the numbers, one at a time, as she reads them. "I use the middle key, 5 (on the number pad) and move my fingers from there" (J). E. looks at the barcode, then at the keyboard, keying in 3 numbers/letters at a time from memory and using the O.D.S to check. L. rarely looks at the keyboard as she knows the keys but like S. if she does, she looks at colour and the name.

FIGURE 18

Problem-Solving Strategies

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
At the checkout	
Paper towels won't scan	Punch in bar code
Cigarettes don't scan "prices fluctuate each week "price sticker on each packet	Ch op checks price sticker " punches in Dept code - 222 "punches 'Dept' key "punches in price numbers "punches 'Action code key
Bottles of Coke (often bought in quantity)	Ch op punches numeric keys for quantity e.g. 3 "Scan bottle
'Error' shows on Customer Display Screen after scanning	Ch op rings bell/calls out to FEC "Price please" price is given.
Deli item won't scan.	Key in dept code, Dept key, price, Cash Tend key.
Cream carton won't scan - has barcode.	L. asks F.E.C. "What's the price of this?" F.E.C. "It's in the catalogue." L. looks through cat. & finds price. Keys in: Dept no., Dept key, price, Amt key.
How do you know which code to use?	"It's the dairy code ... I knew it by heart." (L)
Specials not scanned	Punch in dept code + price on sticker on item (also on flaps on specials price list)
At the kiosk	
Customer asks ch.op re pkt cigs left on T.shop counter Fri. pm. Paid for but left.	L. asks C. who was in T. shop at time. C. goes to service desk & returns. "Nothing was said about it" L. "No" (C). C. gets down new pkt & gives to customer.
Cust buys & pays for cigs changes mind. New cigs cost extra 5c.	J. "That's 5c more" 5c given placed on register in front of scales. Amt NOT keyed in. 5c put in drawer next time opened. Saves J. having to fill in 'merchandise refund form'.

However it is important that the operators know or can easily access the Department Codes, the Error Codes and the Price Look Up list. Associated with this is the need to be able to match numbers accurately, for example when checking numbers on a Card Authorisation sheet, or load sheet; when putting prices on the pricing gun or marking 'specials'; matching seal numbers (on 'the bag' or the drawer) with the number on 'the slip'; or when shelving or exchanging items.

Interpretive summary

It would appear from the variation in strategies adopted by the checkout operators that some use visual cues, others prefer tactile finger movements, whereas L. relies to a great extent on automaticity. Again many of the problem-solving strategies are learnt on-the-job and vary adaptively with the changing nature of the problems and the changing conditions of the social context.

Estimation is often used as a checking device. S. usually estimates prices for fruit and vegetables to check that the correct weight is showing on the weight screen "that it's about right" then she checks the price shown on the Operator Display Screen (O.D.S.) "To tell if you have made an error by keying in" (S). For example a customer coming through Checkout 10 had only two items. L. scanned the first one but the second item did not scan. L. did not realise this but packed both items and subtotalled. However when she looked at the O.D.S. which showed $4.10 she realised that the total was not enough "Oh! I forget the battery. I thought it was a bit low".

In a different situation J. was observed using her hands to estimate the size of freezer bags for a customer who did not understand the metric sizes.

Often when 'doing the list' in the kiosk, the operator decides on the number of cartons necessary by looking at the cartons of each brand on the bench shelf and visualising the number of cartons needed to fill the pile on top of the bench.

Interpretive summary

These are examples of two distinct forms of estimation. The first two are of numerical estimation used for checking purposes: for correct weight; and keying in correct totals. The second two exemplify the operator's visualising techniques in demonstrating size and when ordering stock to fill shelves. However, all the strategies used are context-dependent and adopted while the checkout operator is operating in particular social situations.

Operations.

Checkout operators are also required to be competent in numeracy operations such as addition of numbers and money. For example the operator totals the amounts on 'the slip' and also the amount of change requested on the 'change order form'.

When 'doing the count' in the kiosk, fractions are used. The operator writes the number of each brand and type next to the name listed in the stockbook, in a column under the correct date (Appendices L and M). The number which is expressed as a fraction of the number of cigarette packets in a carton, is written in the right half of the box in the stockbook.

> Tobaccos come in 6 to a box, so if there's one whole box of 6 and 1 loose packet, you write 1 1/6. If the tobacco's 2 packets of 10 you write 2. If there's an extra loose one, you write 2 1/10. You count the packets of tobacco first then the loose ones on the shelves in the kiosk (L).

Finally, simple multiplication, addition, fractions and averaging may also be used when doing stock orders and the stocktake. This involves counting all the items on each shelf and placing a number sticker in front of the items on the stripping. On completion of the count, the number of items is multiplied by the unit price (using a calculator) and recorded.

Summary

The observations of numeracy events show that checkout operators require certain basic numeracy skills. However the numeracy operations involved are performed within the social context so that other sign systems aid the numeracy process. This is particularly evident when observing the problem-solving strategies adopted by operators. These strategies, developed through prolonged experience on-the-job, reflect firstly, the individual learning-style of the operator and secondly, various perceived needs. These include: the necessity to save time and to be accurate when handling money; and the need to reduce manual labour.

These findings are congruent to those of Scribner (1983) as cited in Chapter 2. Operators have "a large repertoire of solution strategies for what look like the same problem" (Scribner, 1983, p.11). These may be literal solutions but are just as likely to be non-literal. Scribner (1983) postulated a "Law of mental effort: in product assembly, mental work will be expanded to save physical work" (p. 12). To some extent this holds true in the supermarket however a closer relationship would be between mental effort and time saving or accuracy.

> ...all forms of skill expertly carried out possess an outstanding characteristic of rapid adaptation... so what is called the same operation is done now in one way and now in another, but each way is, as we say, 'fitted to the occasion' (Bartlett, cited in Scribner, 1983, p. 21).

4. The Checkout Operator as a User of Spoken Language.

It is suggested in Chapter 1 that in order to fully comprehend communication in the workplace it is necessary to allow for both the 'context of culture' and the 'context of situation'. Thus viewed from a language in use perspective the spoken language of the supermarket not only reflects the culture of the particular supermarket but also that of the three social situations within that culture: the checkout; the kiosk and the shelves.

Field of discourse.

The spoken language of the supermarket is deeply embedded in the social context and varies according to the situation, the users, the use, and the time of day. Thus the **field** of discourse reflects the activities and events which take place in each social situation. Most of the terms used relate directly to the physical context and use (Figure 7, p.30). For example when S. was asked what she called the passageway where customers walk, she replied "There's no name ...We never need to call many things anything". J. who has worked in three different stores, commented that checkout operators from different stores call objects by different names. However use of the in-house terms such as 'smellies' while being a handy abbreviation may also fulfil the function of promoting social cohesion within the Front End staff. Along with training on the job, learning the language of the store helps to instil and maintain necessary attitudes in new operators (Taylor, 1987).

Tenor of discourse.

The second feature of the context of situation is the **tenor** of the spoken language which in this case, concerns the relationships between the checkout operators and other members of staff or customers. With the exception of the manager, no significant change in register was observed when checkout operators spoke to different members of staff when working. Any change in register when speaking to the manager appeared to relate to staff attitudes to the manager as a person rather than status.

> It depends on the sort of person he is whether you ever talk to him or not. We've had about four since I've been working here. Some you don't say boo to. This boss keeps nicking the staff from the Front End to do jobs for him. So then you talk to him (J).

However it was noticeable that speech patterns altered when staff changed roles and became customers, or when staff met off-duty. So register changes in this workplace depend more on role, place, time and activity than on staff status.

Most oral communication between staff at the checkout is in a facilitative, question and answer form such as requests for information or action. Operators must listen carefully to requests from customers or other operators, as well as instructions and directions from the Front End Controller (Figure 19). Usually language is about concrete items: price, return, exchange, delivery, packing; money: change order, clearance, checking change; or other duties: pricing, cleaning, shelving. Also, requests, instructions and directions are usually delivered in context. For these language exchanges there is a standard form of request:

'Delivery please'
'Price please'
'Exchange please'
'Return please'
'Change please'
'Change slip please'
'Check change please'

The exchanges are brief but polite and preceded by the ringing of the bell to attract the attention of the Front End Controller (F.E.C.) or 2IC. These exchanges are a standard 'ritual' form which does not vary with operator. Their brevity ensures that no time is wasted or a customer kept waiting.

When communicating with customers at the checkout, the language varies according to the customer (Figure 20). Each event (putting through an order) is signalled with a 'ritual' greeting "Hi! How are you?"(L) and "Thanks" or "Thankyou" signals the end of the event. But J. says "It's embarrassing having to say 'How are you?' to each customer when you know they really aren't interested in talking to you". So operators use different strategies to avoid embarrassment and relieve the automaticity. One strategy is to differentiate between customers and alter the greeting or farewell accordingly.

FIGURE 19
Listening

- Bell
  - 1 attention F.C. or 2IC
  - 2 need packer
  - 3 queue too long
- Instructions
  - From F.E.C.
  - 2IC
  - PA
    - opening/closing checkout
    - roster - tea/lunch
    - cleaning/tidying
    - scanning
    - uniform
- Questions
  - Other checkout operators
  - customers
    - packing
    - cost
    - product
    - delivery

Beep - noise of scanner

FIGURE 20

Spoken Language Used by Checkout Operators (1)

Change of tenor with type of customer	Customers in general	Ritual Formal	Greeting:	"Hi! How are you today?" (L)
			Request:	"That's $_______"
			Change:	"There you are. ________ change."
			Farewell:	"Thanks". "Thank you."
	Regular customer	Ritual Less formal	Greeting + Request	chat re items, weather
			Farewell +	"Have a nice day (L) Bye" (S)
	Rude customer	Ritual Minimum language Avoidance -	Greeting:	"Hello" (J)
				"Yep" "Right" (S)
			No farewell	
	Small children	Suspension of ritual Inflection changes to talk to child Informal	Greeting:	"Watcha doin hey?" (E)
			Count change aloud +	"There you are" "Okey doke it's all yours now" (S)
			Farewell	"Thank you"
	Elderley customer	Ritual + concern	Greeting: + comment (i.e. items/ weather)	"How are you today" "The rain's not bothering you at all (E)
		Social Informal	Social chat (re 7 picnic bars)	"You like these do you?"
			Farewell (varies in response to customer farewell)	"Thank you" "Bye" (I)
	Manager	Ritual Formal	Greeting:	"Hello"
			Request:	"That's $_______."
			Farewell:	"Thanks"
	Other staff	Suspension of ritual Longer sentences Informal	Greeting:	"You don't really say any greeting 'cause we know them" (L)
			Social:	"You're not going yet?" (L) "What time are you going for lunch (L)
			Farewell:	"See ya later" (2IC) "I'm going home. Bye" (L)

> If it's a customer I don't like, I don't say 'Hello' (L)

> If it's a regular customer, I say 'Have a good day' (L)

> If it's staff coming through the checkout you don't really say any greeting 'cause we know them (L)

If the customer is rude, language is kept to a minimum, a ritual "Hi" or "Hello" (J), "Yep" or "Right" (S) to avoid argument, and no farewell.

> You can't say anything to 'em. You've just gotta go 'Yep right (S)

> Say if you're supposed to say oh... 'Thanks very much' after you give 'em your change an that, you just don't do that (S)

When staff come through as customers there is likely to be more conversation in a more colloquial manner:

C.	"What time are you going for lunch?"
L.	"I don't know, J. what lunch am I on?"
J.	"One o'clock."
C.	"Alright then."
J.	"See ya later."
L.	"You're not going yet?"
J.	"Yeah, I'm going home."

Often when staff friends come through, for example a staff member shopping with her young child, there is a chance to gossip and have a laugh or share a joke (E. giggles a lot). Usually however, casual chats and socialising takes place in the staff tea-room or the take-away shop where "You talk about the weekend or other social events" (L).

When the checkout area is busy the operators have little time for conversation so language is again kept to a minimum:

"How are you today?" - greeting
"That's $17.98" - requesting money
- counting change

"There you are" - accompanying change
"Thanks" - farewell
"Ooh!" - when pizza nearly fell out of the box

However as E. explained:

> If someone comes up, like if I'm the operator/packer and they come up, and like the order is taking a long time, and I can't do it any faster, I'll try an sorta talk to them, in sorta like a friendly (sic) but just to take their mind off how long it's taking for the order to get through... It's really hard sometimes cause you're tryin to get them through quickly and tryin to think of what you're doing and talk to them at the same time. You sorta get a bit lost.

If there is only one customer the operator is generally more relaxed and there is more time to have a conversation while putting through the order. The operator on Checkout 10 has more opportunity to chat as it is an '8 items or less' checkout. Conversation usually revolves around the items being purchased:

S. "It feels like there's nothing in it, it's so light."
Cust."Yes, they'll save me fiddling with pappadams for my curry."

The sentences are longer and more varied especially if answering a customer inquiry or if the customer is elderly. It was noticeable that the operators went out of their way to chat to the elderly 'regulars' on a wider variety of topics, thus making it a social event.

Cust. "What's the hold up?"
J. "I knew you were a pretty good customer so I thought I'd hold you up."
Cust. "I wanna get down to the pub and have a beer. Anyway how've you been?"
J. "Oh alright."
Cust. "How's the girl in blue treatin' you?"
J. "Which one?"
Cust. "Up there" (Nods to service desk).
J. "Oh, alright thanks." (Gives change)
Cust. "See you later."
J. "Bye."

J. "How are you?" (To elderly couple)
Cust. "Welcome to sunny Queensland"
(It's raining outside)
J. "We have had some sunny weather."
Cust. "We did get some washing dry."
J. "When we get our electricity bill
it's going to be a huge one 'cause
we've been using our dryer...
I'm going to Coffs on the weekend,
with my sister."
Cust. "We're going down on Monday."
J. "We'll be on our way back."
Cust. "We're going for a week."
J. "Well have a good time then."
Cust. "Thankyou. Bye."
J. "Bye."

When the customers are small children operators change tenor. Language is usually simplified and often change is slowly counted out aloud into the child's hand. The operator's manner is friendly, sometimes gently teasing.

S. "Okeydoke it's all yours now."

J. "Have you been writing on your nose?
Shows you haven't had a wash."
Child "Yes I have."
J. "Do you want a bag?"
Child "Yes thanks."
(Child goes off rubbing his nose).

Mode of discourse.

The third feature of language in the social situation is that of the **mode** of discourse, in which the checkout operators use language for different purposes depending on the social situation (Figure 21). At the kiosk customers are likely to initiate the language event and therefore the use of the ritual greeting is suspended. The content of the exchange is usually specific about particular items, denoted by brand names:

Cust. "Hello. 4 packets of Winfield Red please."
L. "That's $8.40 change thankyou."

FIGURE 21

Spoken Language Used by Checkout Operators (2)

Use of language	Answering inquiries	Cust. queries price on docket Cust. asks if she can leave parcels.	"Mandarins are $3.99 a kg" (L) "Yeah. That's alright" (J)
	Checking	Cust. gives address Cust. puts eggs on belt.	"130 was it?" "Do you know these are free range eggs?" (J)
	Giving directions	Elderley cust. trying to get trolley into store To cust. in long queue	"Open the gate just down there" J. pointing "There's no-one in ch. out 4."
	Inferencing and directing	Cust. + docket and item standing at kiosk	"For refunds or anything, go to the service between ch. outs 5 and 6."
	Questions	Items on belt Re plant. Re bread and milk	"Are these yours?" to cust. (L) "That's nice. Does it have a flower? (L) "Are they alright together?" (J)
	Problem Solving	Cust. leaves her bag behind Rings bell +	"That lady's left her bag" (L)
	Statements	To cust. who gave too much money Re Natty Cat pet food.	"You can have that back" (L) "I've never seen these before" (L)
	Conversation	To regular cust. (it's raining outside) Conversation about weather, washing, trip to Coffs Harbour.	"Welcome to sunny Queensland" (J)

Cust. "I want a Sterling. Sterling Mild please."
(E. picks out a carton.)
Cust. "No. I want a packet not a carton."
E. "$2.75 please."
Cust. "Thankyou."
E. "Thankyou."

Customers usually ask for items, often pointing them out, so language is always used in context and as there is no scanner in the kiosk, more language is used - in responding to requests, requesting payment or change:

Old lady (pointing) "Do you have those in the grey box?"
L. "I'll see if there are any in bulk for you."
(Rings bell - asks nearby checkout operator)
"Do you have any special mild in the grey carton?" (as opposed to a single pack)
(Operator goes to large display at front end of aisle nearby and brings one).
L. "These are a special - $14.48"
Cust. gives $20
Cust. "I might have the 48c. Is that a help?"
L. "Yes. Thanks."

As the operator on Checkout 10 also operates in the kiosk, she may call from the checkout out to the customer at the kiosk, again suspending the ritual greeting. In this case the operator is trying to reassure the customers that they have been noticed and that she will not keep them waiting any longer than necessary.

Are you right there? (L)
You right? (A)
I'm coming I won't be a minute (L)

When shelving, language exchanges with customers are usually in response to a customer's question about an item:

Cust. "Excuse me, where can I get Glucodin and Lecithin?"
S. "I'll show you. Here's the Glucodin."
(S. reaches across to the Glucodin)
"I don't know where the Lecithin is. I'll find out."
(S. asks F.E.C. then finds Lecithin).

The only time an operator is likely to speak to another member of staff, while working away from the Front End, is when she is asked to do the specials. The operator goes to the different departments and asks:

> Can I have your specials? (S)
>
> Can I have your specials that you want announced over the P.A.? (S)

As can be seen from the above examples and Figure 22, spoken language varies according to use. Language events involving the checkout operator and customers include:

- answering inquiries;

Cust.	"You haven't got any of those lighters for $2 have you?"
L.	"We have 2 sorts." (goes into kiosk, holds them both up)
Cust.	"Are they both $2?"
L.	"This ones $1.99 and this one's $2."

- checking - for example that the customer's address is correct, or that the customer is aware that she is buying fresh eggs which are more expensive;

- giving directions, that is being aware of customers other than the one she is currently dealing with, whether they are in her queue or just generally in the Front End.

Questions are usually asked about items in relation to packing or putting through an order, only if there is time for a conversation are they more general. Sometimes operators use questioning as a strategy to relieve the automaticity of 'operating', if they think the customer is likely to respond.

> Sometimes it just depends on how they appear to us as to whether or not we make conversation or not... if I go shopping, sometimes I don't really feel like talking and so like, it's, I just do it for myself. (E)

FIGURE 22

Spoken Language Used by Checkout Operators (3)

To other checkout operators	Answering Inquiries	- Ch. op. holds up packet of biscuits	"$1.48"
	Checking	- To see if 'the count' needs doing.	"J. Is there a count today?"
	Giving direction	- About the pricing gun.	"See this here - it gets stuck. You've got to push it right in."
	Questions	- L. in kiosk to J. cleaning bench nearby - re fallen packets of cigarettes.	"How come that's farther forward." "Can you ask J. if there's any Camel Plain out the back."
To Front End Controller	Questions	At lunchtime	"Can I close please?"
		Long queue at checkout	"Can you call my packer please?"
		Pricing specials	"Can I have a 'specials' gun please?"
		Re stockbook	"Do you want me to do the stockbook?"
	Problem Solving	Error shows on C.D.S.	"Price please"
		Cust. queries price of potatoes.	"Can you do something about these potatoes please?"
To packer	Checking	When scanning many cans of cat food.	"Did you count 28?"
	Giving directions	re. order	"This is a home delivery."
		re large cans when trolley full	"Put those cans on the bottom."

Problems involving customers (Figure 18, p.69) such as customers querying the price of items, asking for an item exchange, or asking about items which have been left, involve the operator in communicating with the F.E.C. or 2IC, first by bell and then with a spoken request. Operators are also very aware at how quickly customers become irritable if kept waiting but at the same time respond to regulars:

> who help us out in tight spots... some customer will
> come up and say 'Doin a wonderful job' and
> you say 'Yes, I know! (E)

Language is used differently when checkout operators are communicating with other members of staff (Figure 22). Although questions and answers are given in regard to the price of items, or whether they are on special; much of the language has to do with social activities or helping each other at work.

> It's mainly just favours that we talk to them
> or we order them, you know, ask them to do
> things. (E)

The difference is that operators know each other personally and the 'younger ones' spend a lot of time together socially. In the staff room or coffee shop conversation is "best friend talk" (E) but much of the time the talk is about the problems they have at work. In this store the staff get on well together and this social cohesion is reflected in the workplace as they 'do favours' for each other or ask the F.E.C. if something needs doing, that is initiating activities, rather than waiting to be asked.

Summary.

Spoken language on-the-job is usually context specific, to do with items, money or activities; polite but brief. Listening is most important as requests, instructions or directions are only given once. Events such as 'putting through an order' are signalled by the use of ritual greetings and farewells, and requests to the F.E.C. signalled by the use of a bell and minimum language. The tenor of language varies according to the customer, the time of day, the situation and the function of the language rather than the status of staff in the organisation.

As discussed in Chapter 1, success in communication with customers or staff depends on the ability of the checkout operator to change register according to the function of language or the type of customer.

> The register is what you are speaking at the time, depending on what you are doing and the nature of the activity in which the language is functioning (Halliday & Hasan, 1986, p. 41).

5. The checkout operator and accountability.

The researcher entered the workplace to study the communication demands placed on the checkout operators as they operate within three social situations. These have been discussed in the preceding chapters. However as the study progressed, underlying themes began to emerge. As the checkout operators and the social situation became increasingly familiar, insights were gained into what it is like to be a checkout operator. If communication demands are to be genuinely discussed they must be seen in relation to the hidden agenda, the complex system of checks and accountability.

Checks

The most obvious physical manifestation of the checking procedures are those which take place at the checkouts. All operators are responsible for checking bags, trolleys and the folders of sales representatives as they leave the store. Similarly all items bought by staff are checksealed as they are brought into the store or at the checkout when paying for them. Then as staff leave the store these seals are again checked.

Checkouts 1 and 10 are known as security checkouts as they are closest to the entrances to the store. They open first and close last and always have an operator. Lastly, the 'security aisle' is opposite the Service Desk and is used by operators carrying their drawers and bags, so they are continually in view.

Operators are individually accountable to the store. Each operator must only use her own drawer and, as previously discussed in Chapter 4, measures are taken to ensure that there is no tampering with 'the bag'. Slips, till numbers, and checkseals are all used to identify the operator and ensure security and accountability. Checkout registers are also cleared regularly:

> Clearances are done in case someone robs us or to make sure we don't steal any too I suppose. (J)

Individual assessment

Each operator is also continually assessed by the Front End Controller on a Function Efficiency Assessment Sheet (Appendix N). The twenty functions include those related to store security; store image - correct uniform, smile, communication with the customers; and accuracy. Operators are aware that they are being constantly appraised and this adds to the stress of the job. Both S. and J. commented about being 'watched' all the time. Consequently operators check everything. S. watches the keyboard and the Operator Display Screen alternately to "check that the correct amount came through on the barcode" or if the item does not scan she presses Department Entry "to see if I have put in the right price", then checks that "I have put in the correct amount entered". The amount tendered by the customer is checked twice, once as it is given to the operator and again as it is placed into the till. The coins go in first and the notes placed into 'the clip'. The change is taken out and only then are the notes put away. This ensures that there is no question as to how much a customer has tendered.

A customer's change is checked twice, once when taking it out of the till and again when handing it to the customer:

> We check the change for our own safeguard that we didn't give too much or too little. (J)
>
> It's easy to give the wrong amount of change out. Then you get into trouble. (S)

Some checks are also built into the computer system, for example 'visual verify', when the computer requests verification of the price of an item just scanned. "It's asking you to check the item to see if it's reduced" (S). However, as we have seen, operators develop other strategies to safeguard themselves, such as: counting money tendered into piles for ease of checking, when at the kiosk; matching 'signs' when checking the price of an item; asking the packer to check the amount tendered by the customer as "sometimes customers claim they have given you more than they actually have" (L); and checking the change which has been ordered:

> The $5 notes always stick together and it doesn't look like you've got much. You have to keep counting them to check on how much you've got. (L)

Automaticity and customer service

Oral communication with other staff members on the job, such as the ritual 'check change please', 'price check please', is usually related to accuracy and accountability, whereas communication with customers must primarily focus on maintaining the image of the store. Checkout operators are very conscious of providing good customer service as well as being accountable for money and items. However operators commented that the repetitiveness of the job and scanning system can result in a loss of concentration and the tendency to 'switch off':

> Scanners are good but ... once you learn how to do them, you sorta, ... after a while, you get so used to doing it that you don't need to use your brain anymore and you switch off. (L)

Most operators have to make a conscious effort to remain alert. S. said that she tried to make what she said to each customer different, "otherwise you get so bored you feel like a computer, saying the same thing over and over again" and E. also commented that she felt "like a robot". Four out of five operators stated that dealing with customers was the most stressful part of their job, especially when customers are rude or throw items, as had happened to L.

> Ever since we got the scanners in it's been worse because they complain about items being wrong ... and cause they haven't got the prices on the things any more. (S)

The kiosk

In addition, operators on Checkout 10 have added responsibilities including: pricing items; doing the list; doing the count; doing the returns; and filling out film processing forms. Understandably, operators do not enjoy working in the kiosk, which they refer to as 'the cage' because of the enclosed space and added pressure for accountability.

Automatic and manual checks.

We have seen that where possible accuracy and accountability are built into the computer system both at the office and the checkouts. However where this is not applicable, written communication is used. Lists are used for checking or recording purposes and all forms are completed with the signature or initials of the operator, often also accompanied by a personal identification number, both for store security and operator control.

Initial screening process

Due to the specific demands and needs of personnel in this retail organisation, the employer uses a selective recruitment policy.

Prospective checkout operators for example, are given a half hour test, conducted by the Commonwealth Employment Service, as an initial screening. The test covers basic arithmetic, change calculation, and observation skills, with each section subject to a time limit. Possible recruits are then interviewed by the organisation's regional personnel officer. Not only does the organisation wish employees to project the company image but emphasis is also placed on the need for good service.

> In most cases she or he are the only contact a customer has in a modern retail outlet. The checkout operator can influence the shopping habits of customers. If they do not like the operators they may choose to shop elsewhere. (F.E.C.)

Checkout operators' perceptions of communication

Checkout operators require many attributes, however few operators perceive reading and writing as being part of the job. Further, the reading they do during training is not always seen to be relevant, as L. commented "the reading that we did was irrelevant to what we really had to know when we got here".

Goodman (1984) in commenting on why people read, identified five major purposes of reading: environmental, occupational, informational, recreational, and ritualistic. With the exception of ritualistic reading, checkout operators would engage to some extent in all the other purposes of reading at some time during the working day. However, due to the contextual nature of reading, purposes other than recreational are not usually identified by operators. Checking Price Look-Up Lists or scanning operating lists are not perceived as reading. Similarly, filling in change order-forms or 'the slip' is not writing. These activities are just things that you do when operating. The possession of these skills, together with numeracy and the ability to use sign systems, are taken for granted by operators, so much so that their use becomes automatic.

What operators do see as important is the ability and necessity to 'keep the customer happy' and in order to do this they must have facility with spoken language. When asked what qualities and skills are necessary for a good operator, the Front End Controller stated:

> The main points we look for are a pleasant personality and ability to get on with people. Our staff are encouraged to be friendly and always make a point of talking to EVERY customer.

Descriptive summary

The necessity to have good public relations, the concern for store security and the need for accuracy, means that checkout operators are subject to many rules and regulations. Language and terminology mirror this concern with regulations and control. The word 'check' is used almost as often as the word 'please'. Checks are used by the organisation in all areas to control the operators and assist accuracy. Even the term 'checkout' is significant as literally everything has to be 'checked out' as people leave the store.

As with any job in which the employees have to deal with the public, that of the checkout operator necessitates a partial loss of personal freedom and identity.

> We apologise on behalf of everyone else and we do it 'cause we're the last ones to have them and it's our responsibility to keep them customers... like you can't be ignorant, but you can't be sorta emotionally involved with what they say... we do anything that we can, to keep the customers happy... but, I mean **we're not super people** (E).

Thus communication skills are subtle aspect of the vital area of customer relations. The checkout operator needs effective communication skills in order to operate efficiently, project the company image when dealing with the public, and protect the store's security. However, she must also be able to cope with the stresses of her job while not having the satisfaction of seeing an 'end product' and not receiving many rewards.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Traditional studies in workplace literacy have concentrated on two areas. They either have listed the skills deemed necessary to fit a person to a job, or conducted task analysis by studying the reading and writing demands of a particular job. In doing so, they have failed to address communication demands from the perspective of the employee. Communication in the supermarket reflects the social situation as well as the individual's competencies. Therefore a form of ethnographic research which requires the observation of variables within a social setting was found to be most appropriate. By adopting a naturalistic approach the researcher was able to experience and document the on-going events and contexts in the supermarket from the perspective of the checkout operator. This has provided multiple demonstrations of the functions of communication, communication in use, and learning through communication.

Through persistent observations over a period of time, it was possible to identify and describe those characteristics of the workplace which formed the routines and patterns of events. Additionally, prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to become oriented to the social situation and to collect evidence which effectively demonstrates how communication in the supermarket is deeply embedded in the social context.

1. Findings

The substantive findings of the study which were discussed in the previous chapter, are:

- Success in communication depends on the ability of the checkout operator to make predictions or inferences based on the underlying rules of the workplace.

- Print is highly contextualised so that both the social situation and the function of print affect meaning.
- Literacy events call for the use of appropriate literacy competencies more consistently than for extended reading and writing.
- Literacy demands of training courses are perceived by checkout operators as being 'difficult' and 'irrelevant'.
- Checkout operators require basic numeracy skills but due to the contextualised nature of numeracy operations, use is made of other sign systems.
- Experienced checkout operators develop a range of problem-solving strategies to save time, labour, and ensure accuracy.
- Spoken language is usually context-specific, polite but brief, almost ritualised.
- Register changes according to the function of language or type of customer rather than the status of staff or customers.
- Checkout operators need effective communication skills in order to:
  - operate efficiently;
  - project the company image when dealing with the public;
  - protect store security.

These observations and data from interviews provide a new perspective from which to view communication in the workplace and to consider implications for future research and workplace communication classes or training.

What has emerged strongly is the role of the checkout operator as a user of sign systems in a social context. Instead of the expected transfer of knowledge from a set of particular skills learnt at school or in training, to the general communication demands of the workplace, the reverse progression occurs. New checkout operators bring their prior knowledge gained from school or training and life experiences, and adapt this to the specific requirements of the social situation. As demonstrated through the discussion of literacy and numeracy events, use of sign systems and oral language, the checkout operator learns on-the-job the specific knowledge about objects and symbols, and their use in context, which is necessary for efficient operating. Through this domain specific knowledge, experienced operators then develop flexible strategies for problem-solving, to save time and labour, and check for accuracy.

2. Implications of the socio-semiotic perspective.

It has been demonstrated in Chapter 5 - The checkout operator as a user of sign systems, that the supermarket has a plethora of sign systems some of which may be interpreted in different ways. For example one, two or three rings of the bell has signification only for insiders, it is something standing for something else.

If as stated in Chapter 1, the workplace is considered to be a culture (Spradley, 1980) then the social nature of the sign systems becomes vitally significant. Communication is just one of a number of systems of meaning which are exchanged within a social situation which is in turn embedded within the context of culture (Halliday, 1986). In fact, if the term 'text' is taken to mean, that which is spoken or written or any other sign system, then:

> because of the specialised nature of occupations, texts may be all but incomprehensible to outsiders unfamiliar with subject matter, text conventions abbreviations, and acronyms. In fact, some texts may be expressly designed to be comprehensible only to insiders. (Goodman, 1984, p. 99)

Similarly with spoken language, the success of communication depends on the checkout operator's ability to make predictions and inferences based on the underlying rules known only to participants within the social situation. Thus the checkout operator, who superficially appears as the 'robot' at the checkout, is revealed as a person who requires certain basic literacy and numeracy skills, but more than these she requires the ability to communicate through a variety of sign systems.

3. Implications from the checkout operator's perspective.

It has been shown that communication is used for a wide variety of purposes, with a range of audiences, in each of three social situations. In the area of spoken language, checkout operators change register according to the function of language, the context, the time of day and the operator's perception of the customer. The functions and purposes of print materials also vary. As Goodman (1984) stated, "What a reader comprehends in a given literacy event is very much related to the reader's purpose" (p. 100). At some time during the working day checkout operators would engage to some extent in: environmental reading, occupational reading, informational reading and recreational reading. However due to the embedded nature of text if an operator were asked, "What reading have you done today?" the response would likely refer only to recreational reading activities.

Checkout operators may not be aware of the extent of their own communication skills. To a large extent these skills are used automatically, following sets of rules learnt on-the-job. However the operators are vitally aware of the necessity for good public relations, the concern for store security, and need for accuracy. They must be flexible to solve problems, be accountable and learn to cope with the stresses of dealing with the general public.

> Literacy is not some list of dispassionate skills that we invent in the isolation of our experimentation, nor is it a series of events to be teased out of ethnographic data. Literacy cannot be quantified in numbers, nor is it directly

> related to the frequency of use ... To be literate is a uniquely human experience, one that enables us to deal with ourselves...
> (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988, p. 201)

and, it could be added, our social and cultural environment. What Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines say of literacy can be applied equally to communication.

4. Implications for educators.

It has been demonstrated that the communication demands of the job of checkout operator in this particular workplace are quite complex, requiring a range of literacy, numeracy, oral and semiotic skills. Employees are often expected to excel at narrowly-defined tasks in class or training, with the expectation that these will transfer to the workplace. Yet little credit is given for the complex communication skills which are so essential for performance on-the-job.

> One of the ways our people are kept out of jobs is when they make you pass tests about things that don't have anything to do with what you're going to do in the plant. (Schafft cited in Scribner, 1986, p. 47)

Indications from the workplace data are that communication in the supermarket is deeply embedded in the social context. Therefore:

- As far as possible training should take place on-the-job. New employees should observe/work with experienced workers to learn the communication patterns of the workplace; including use of insider terminology; and specific use of sign systems.

- In jobs where spoken language is important, it is essential that training be given in oral communication skills, including how to handle difficult customers. This may be achieved through simulations, role play, and observations on-the-job.

- In training, use should be made of documents from the workplace because:
  - subject matter is relevant to the particular job.
  - specific text format is used e.g. lists, charts.
  - alpha-numeric symbols, alphabetic sequencing, or computer technology may be used.

- Instruction should be given in:
  - reading-to-do skills; locating and using information following directions; using graphs, charts and tables.
  - reading-to-learn strategies for on-the-job training and access to upgrading of skills.
  - numeracy and problem-solving strategies.

5. Implications for government.

In 1979, Young recognised that technological changes and educational advances would radically alter the demand for skilled and semi-skilled labour, and suggested that there be a major reorganisation of trade training and financial support. Possibilities included percaptis financial support for technical training to 'be on a par with that for academic tertiary education, and the establishment of 'learning factories' that is, utilising idle machinery for on-the-job training.

Australian Government reports also recognise the link between literacy and employment, and the need to support literacy education programs. The National Language Policy (1984) states:

> Non-readers are socially and financially disadvantaged compared with other Australians.
> ... many are unemployed or are employed in manual or semi-skilled occupations. Because they cannot read, they have limited opportunities for vocational training or further education.

Although these statements have been made, adult basic education provision in Australia is still provided on what Blundell (1986) calls an "ad hoc and make-do-and-mend" basis. What is required is a coherent structured response in the form of a flexible multi-agency development, in TAFE colleges, the workplace and the community. Some of the proposals in this study would go a long way to incorporating the teaching of communication skills in such programs.

6. Implications for future research.

The researcher has provided the first ethnographic study of communication in the workplace in Australia. The adoption of a naturalistic methodology has enabled the investigator to document the on-going activities and events in the supermarket from the perspective of the employee. Although this study has attempted to identify and explore the communication demands of one job, the picture is far from complete. Evidence from this research highlights the need for further studies which might include:

- Using a naturalistic methodology to conduct a similar study of other personnel, such as trainee managers, within the particular supermarket.
- Using this research as a model, to transfer the observational methods described to study other jobs in other workplaces.

In conclusion, this study has provided evidence which challenges the unitary view of literacy often held by educators and trainers. Literacy is not an isolated construct but is one aspect of communication which also incorporates oracy, numeracy and use of sign systems, all within a social and cultural context. Thus the ability to operate effectively in the workplace requires a range of complex communication skills plus the flexibility to adapt and experience to develop strategies on-the-job.

It has also been demonstrated that a form of naturalistic inquiry is a most appropriate research method for identifying the communication demands in the workplace.

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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

Literacy	Usually refers to use of written language - reading and writing.
Communication	Used in this study to include: reading writing, speaking, listening, and use of alpha-numeric and other sign systems.
Semiotic	Meaning conveyed through a sign system.
Peer debriefing	Discussion of data with a non-involved peer professional.
Participant observation	The researcher observes in the workplace during the activity/event and makes field notes on site.
Triangulation	Checking observations or inferences with other evidence e.g. concrete materials, taped conversations or member checks.
Member checks	The researcher checks with participants in the study, to confirm inferences, elucidate information etc.
Audit trail	On-going account of research methods, problems and insights, which may be viewed by an external auditor to validate the research.
Insider terms	Names given to objects and events by participants in the workplace.
Constant comparative method of data analysis	Continuous sifting and reviewing of data to identify emerging patterns or themes.
Prolonged engagement	The researcher spends a considerable length of time in the workplace to gain a clear orientation to what is happening.

Persistent observation	The researcher makes focused observations of activities over a period of time to identify patterns or atypical events.
Thick description	A detailed description of events including examples of actual spoken or written language in which speakers/writers are identified.

APPENDIX B

Price Look Up (PLU) List

Mushrooms
14 - Button
32 - Flat

392 Nashi Fruit

23 Nectarines
43 nectarines new zealand

Nuts
58 - almonds
47 Brazil
62 Chestnuts
64 Hazelnuts
91 Mixed
60 Peanuts
72 Pecan
76 Pistachio
34 Walnut.

83 OCKRA

ONIONS
16 - Brown
19 - White
226 - Spring*
40 - Odour-less
119 - NZ Brown

ORANGE
5 - navel
96 - californian navel
48 - Valencia
97 - Cal/Valencia

OLIVES -
114 - Black
63 - Green

339 PARSLEY*
351 parsley hydro*

29 PARSNIPS

230 PASSIONFRUIT

66 PAW PAW
115 paw paw hawain

PEACHES
41 - yellow
25 - red
102 - white
130 - Golden Queen

106 PEACHERINE

PEAS
194 - Sugar
112 - Snow

PEARS
36 - Brown
13 - Green
258 - Prickly.
133 - Sensation/Corel

PINEAPPLE
163 - smooth*
243 - Rough*

162 PERSIMMONS

244 PLAINTAIN

PLUMS
134 blue
27 blood
118 President
123 Purple
122 Wilson

64 POMEGRANETS

POTATOES
126 - Brushed
42 - Gormet/Small
39 - Sweet
31 - Red/Pontiac
3 - White Wash

54 QUINCES

PUMPKIN
209 Baby Blue
146 - Butternut
211 - Gold Nugget
242 - Jap
144 - Old Blue
266 - Paw Paw

231 RADISH*

205 ROCKMELONS

232 RHUBARB

116 ROSELLAS

202 SILVERBEET*

Squash
84 - Button
173 - Golden
109 - Scallopini

233 SPINACH*

204 STRAWBERRIES PUNNET*

24 SWEDES

71 TARO

166 TAMARILLO*

50 TANGELLOS

235 TANGERINES

TOMATOES
128 - cherry
305 - classic
167 - large
51 - Roma/Egg

250 TURNIPS WHITE

216 VEGETABLE SPAGHETTI

151 WATER MELON

94 WHITLOF

18 Zuchini
121 Zuchini white

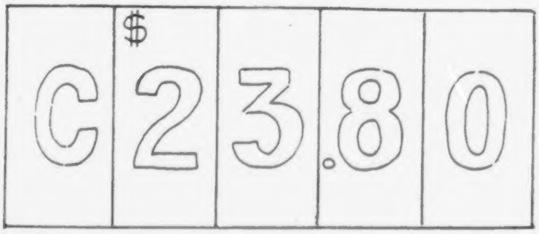
PRE-PACKS
187 - Apples - Red 2kg*
332 - Delicious - 2kg*
331 - Granny Smith - 2kg*
334 - Onions - Brown 2kg*
335 - Onions - white 2kg*
229 - Oranges - navel 3kg
333 - Orange - valencia 3kg*
336 - potatoes - washed
337 - potatoes - Brushed 2.5kg
338 - potatoes - Brushed 5kg

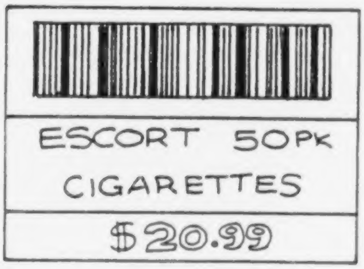
2nd P.L.U. list

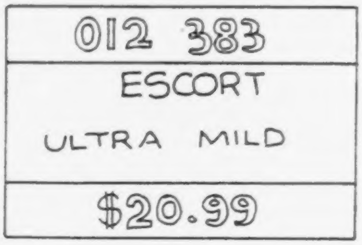
* = you don't weigh the ones with asterisks.

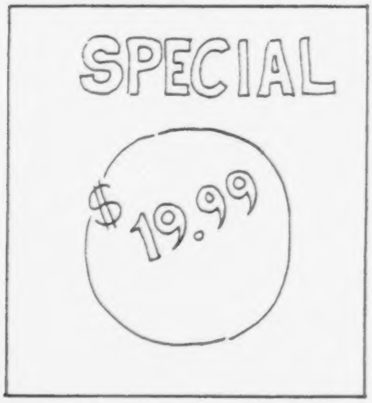
APPENDIX C

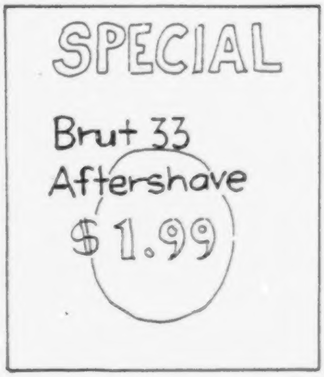
Stripping, Barcode and Flags




ESCORT 50PK
CIGARETTES
$20.99

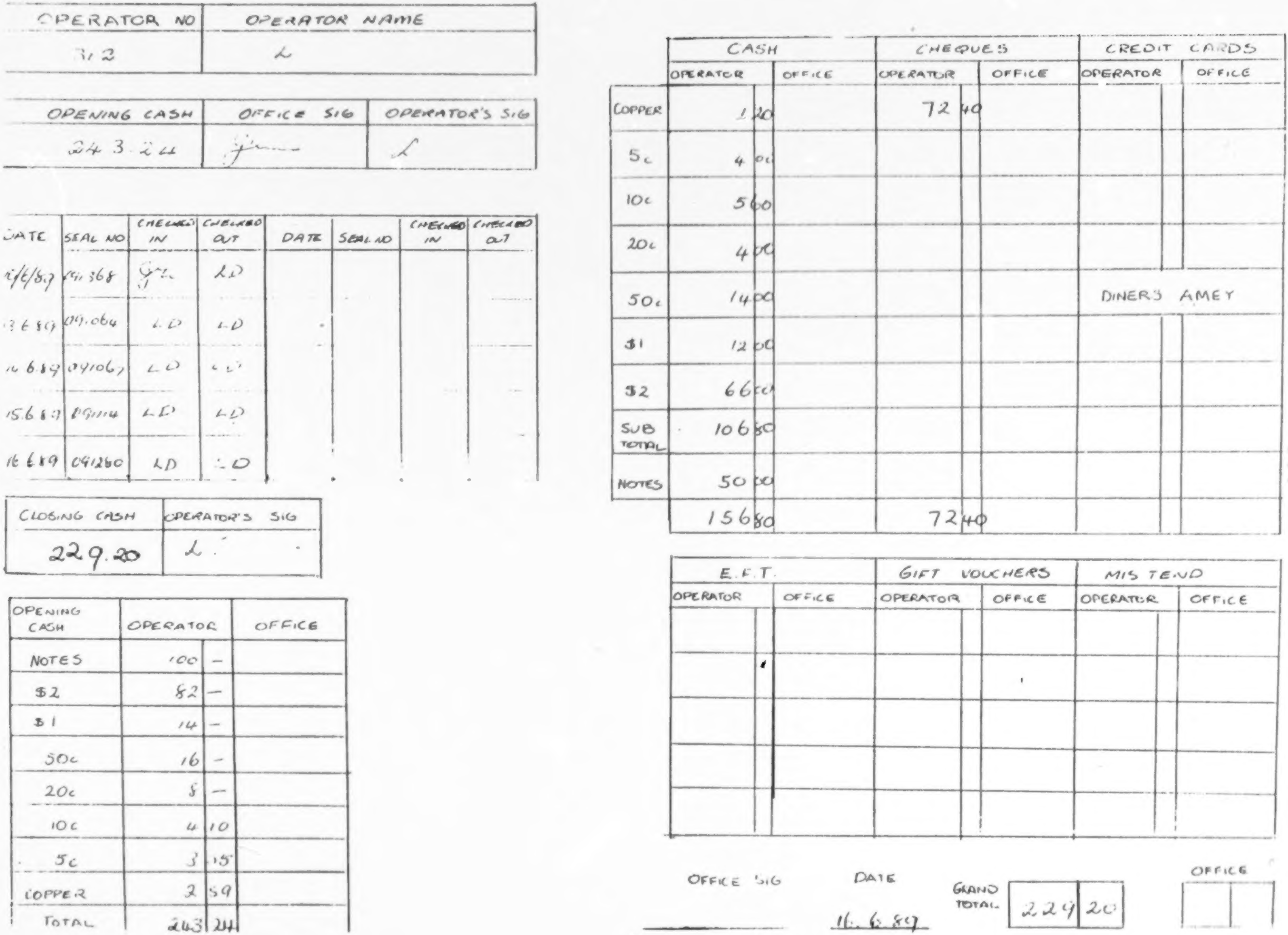

012 383
ESCORT
ULTRA MILD
$20.99


SPECIAL
$19.99


SPECIAL
Brut 33
Aftershave
$1.99

APPENDIX D

The Slip



OPERATOR NO	OPERATOR NAME
312	L

OPENING CASH	OFFICE SIG	OPERATOR'S SIG
243.24		L

DATE	SEAL NO	CHECKED IN	CHECKED OUT	DATE	SEAL NO	CHECKED IN	CHECKED OUT
12/6/89	091368		LD				
13 6 89	09.064	LD	LD				
14 6 89	091067	LD	LD				
15 6 89	09114	LD	LD				
16 6 89	091260	LD	LD				

CLOSING CASH	OPERATOR'S SIG
229.20	L

OPENING CASH	OPERATOR		OFFICE
NOTES	100	–	
$2	82	–	
$1	14	–	
50c	16	–	
20c	8	–	
10c	4	10	
5c	3	15	
COPPER	2	59	
TOTAL	243	24	

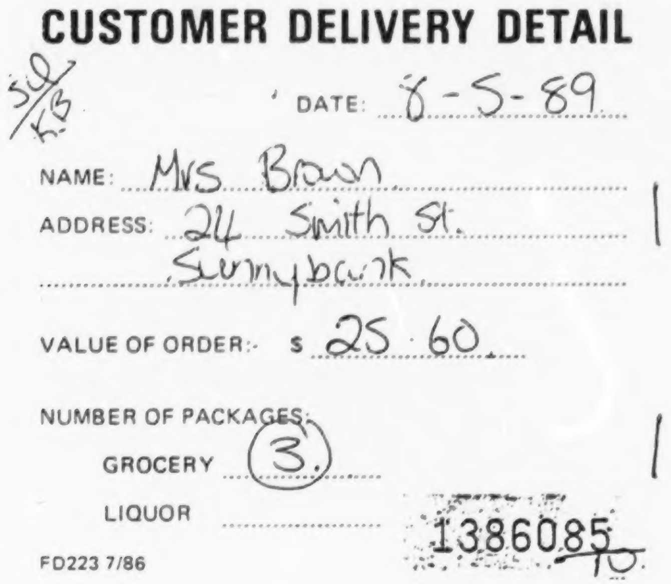
	CASH			CHEQUES			CREDIT CARDS		
	OPERATOR		OFFICE	OPERATOR		OFFICE	OPERATOR		OFFICE
COPPER	1	20		72	40				
5c	4	00							
10c	5	60							
20c	4	00							
50c	14	00					DINERS AMEX		
$1	12	00							
$2	66	00							
SUB TOTAL	106	80							
NOTES	50	00							
	156	80		72	40				

E.F.T.			GIFT VOUCHERS			MIS TEND	
OPERATOR		OFFICE	OPERATOR		OFFICE	OPERATOR	OFFICE

OFFICE SIG	DATE	GRAND TOTAL			OFFICE	
	16.6.89	229	20			

APPENDIX E

Delivery Form. Change Order Form



CUSTOMER DELIVERY DETAIL

Sul/K.B.

DATE: 8-5-89

NAME: Mrs Brown

ADDRESS: 24 Smith St.
Sunnybank

VALUE OF ORDER:- $ 25.60

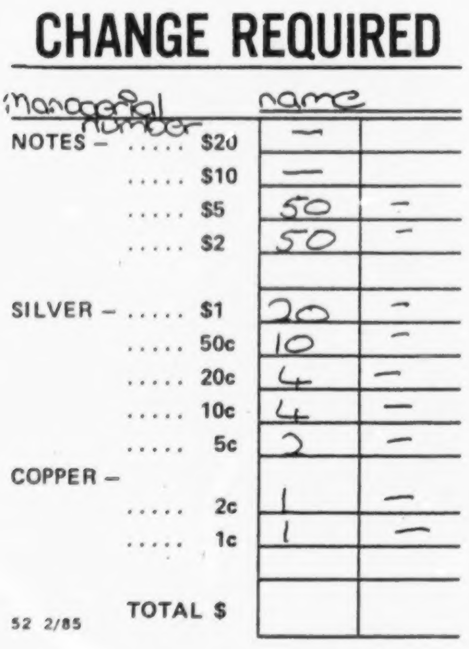
NUMBER OF PACKAGES:

GROCERY (3.)

LIQUOR

1386085 10

FD223 7/86

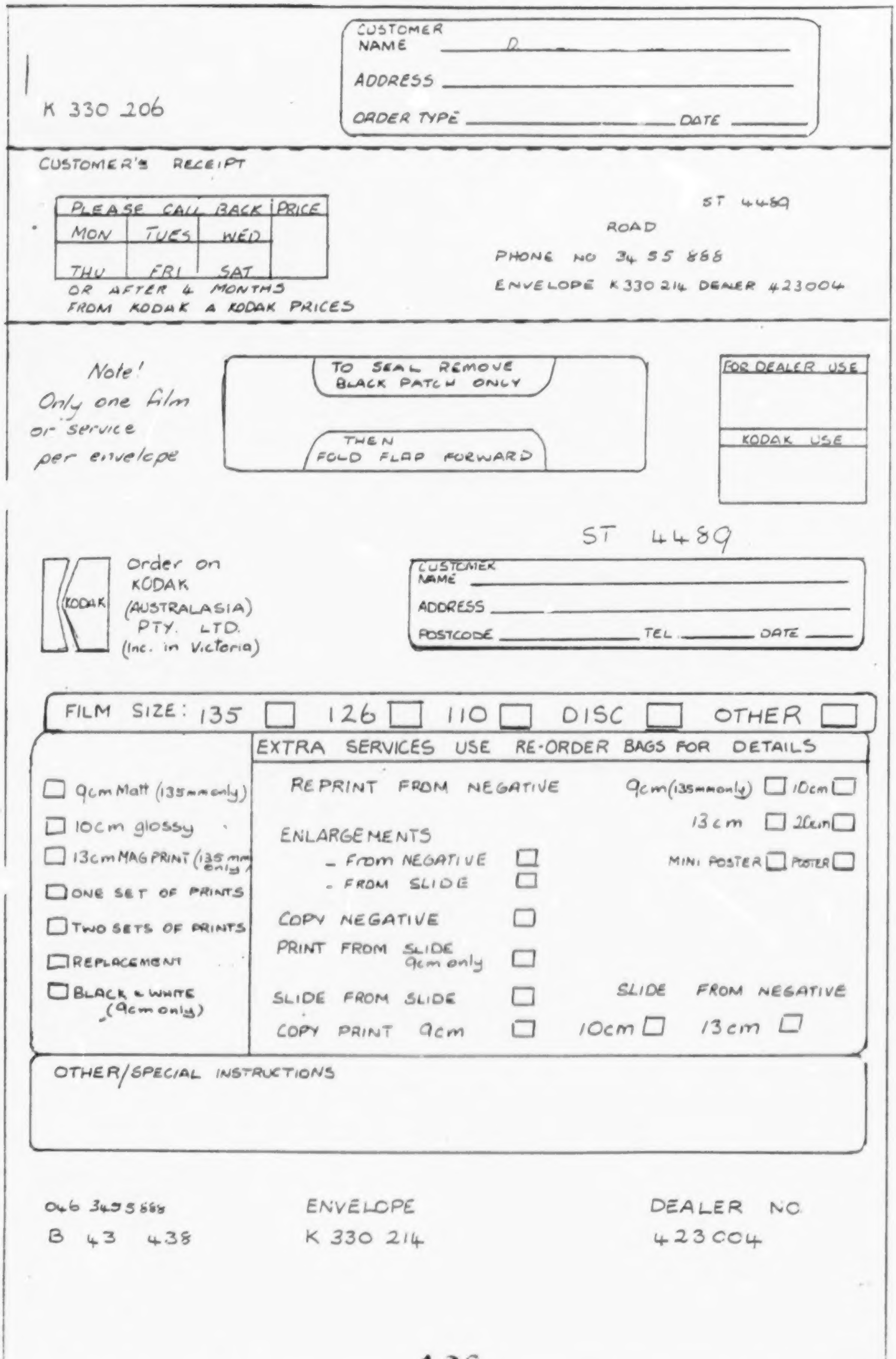


CHANGE REQUIRED

Managerial number	name	
NOTES – $20	—	
..... $10	—	
..... $5	50	–
..... $2	50	–
SILVER – $1	20	–
..... 50c	10	–
..... 20c	4	–
..... 10c	4	–
..... 5c	2	–
COPPER –		
..... 2c	1	–
..... 1c	1	–
TOTAL $		

52 2/85

Kodak Processing Envelope



K 330 206

CUSTOMER NAME D
ADDRESS
ORDER TYPE DATE

CUSTOMER'S RECEIPT

PLEASE CALL BACK			PRICE
MON	TUES	WED	
THU	FRI	SAT	

OR AFTER 4 MONTHS
FROM KODAK A KODAK PRICES

ST 4489
ROAD
PHONE NO 34 55 888
ENVELOPE K 330 214 DEALER 423004

Note!
Only one film
or service
per envelope

TO SEAL REMOVE
BLACK PATCH ONLY

THEN
FOLD FLAP FORWARD

FOR DEALER USE

KODAK USE

ST 4489

KODAK
Order on
KODAK
(AUSTRALASIA)
PTY. LTD.
(Inc. in Victoria)

CUSTOMER NAME
ADDRESS
POSTCODE TEL DATE

FILM SIZE: 135 ☐ 126 ☐ 110 ☐ DISC ☐ OTHER ☐

☐ 9cm Matt (135mm only)
☐ 10cm glossy
☐ 13cm MAG PRINT (135 mm only)
☐ ONE SET OF PRINTS
☐ TWO SETS OF PRINTS
☐ REPLACEMENT
☐ BLACK & WHITE (9cm only)

EXTRA SERVICES USE RE-ORDER BAGS FOR DETAILS

REPRINT FROM NEGATIVE 9cm (135mm only) ☐ 10cm ☐
13cm ☐ 20cm ☐

ENLARGEMENTS
- From NEGATIVE ☐
- FROM SLIDE ☐

MINI POSTER ☐ POSTER ☐

COPY NEGATIVE ☐

PRINT FROM SLIDE 9cm only ☐

SLIDE FROM SLIDE ☐

SLIDE FROM NEGATIVE

COPY PRINT 9cm ☐ 10cm ☐ 13cm ☐

OTHER/SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

046 345 5888
B 43 438

ENVELOPE
K 330 214

DEALER NO
423004

4109

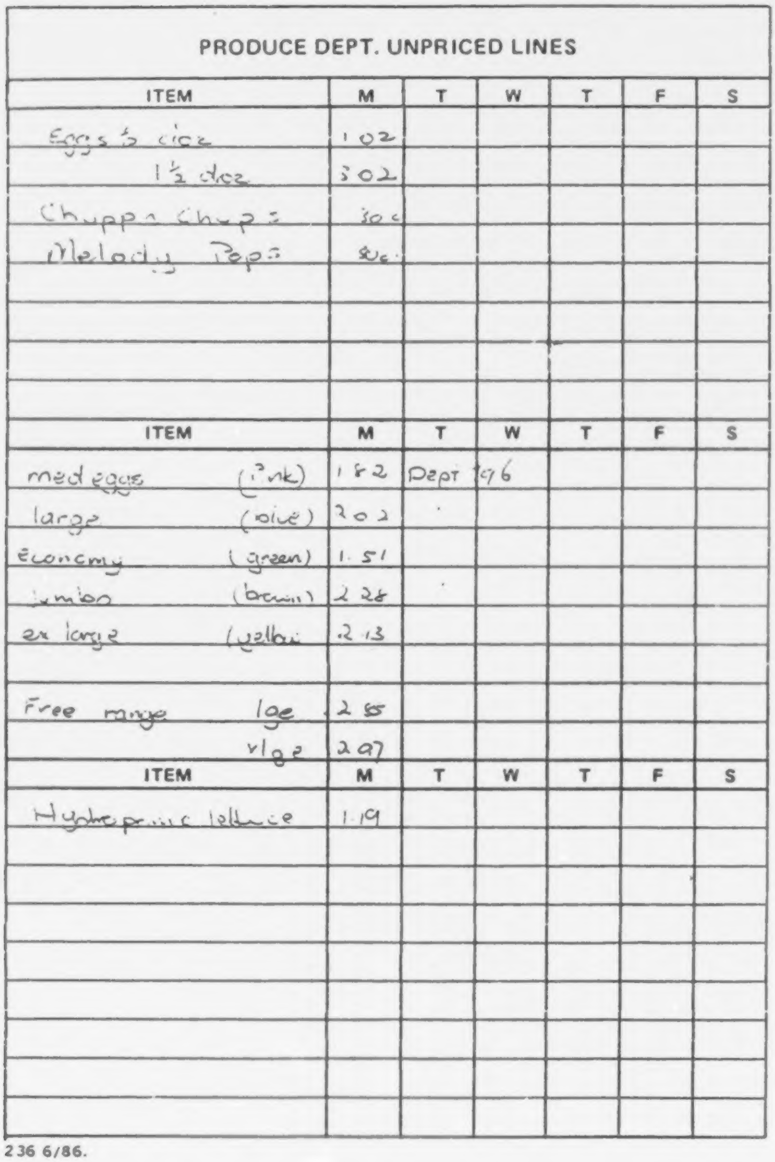
APPENDIX G

Processing Service Dealer Record Card

Envelope No	Date	Customer Name	Order/Film Size	Price
K330 205	29.5.89	DESLANERS	135 x 24	9.95
K 330 206	"	"	"	9.95
K 330 207	"	"	"	9.95
K 330 208	"	"	"	9.95
K330 209	"	"	135 x 36	9.95
K 330 210	31-5	PAULI	126 x 12	14.45
K 330 211	31-5	KAREY	Rep Neg + slide	
K 330 212				
K 330213	5/6	MRS TAIT	110 x 24	

APPENDIX H

The Flaps - Unpriced Items



PRODUCE DEPT. UNPRICED LINES

ITEM	M	T	W	T	F	S
Eggs ½ doz	1 02					
1½ doz	3 02					
Chuppa Chups	30c					
Melody Pops	80c					
ITEM	M	T	W	T	F	S
med eggs (pink)	1 82	Dept 196				
large (blue)	2 0 2					
economy (green)	1. 51					
jumbo (brown)	2 28					
ex large (yellow	2 13					
Free range lge	2 55					
vlge	2 97					
ITEM	M	T	W	T	F	S
Hydroponic lettuce	1.19					

236 6/86.

APPENDIX I

The Flaps - Department Codes

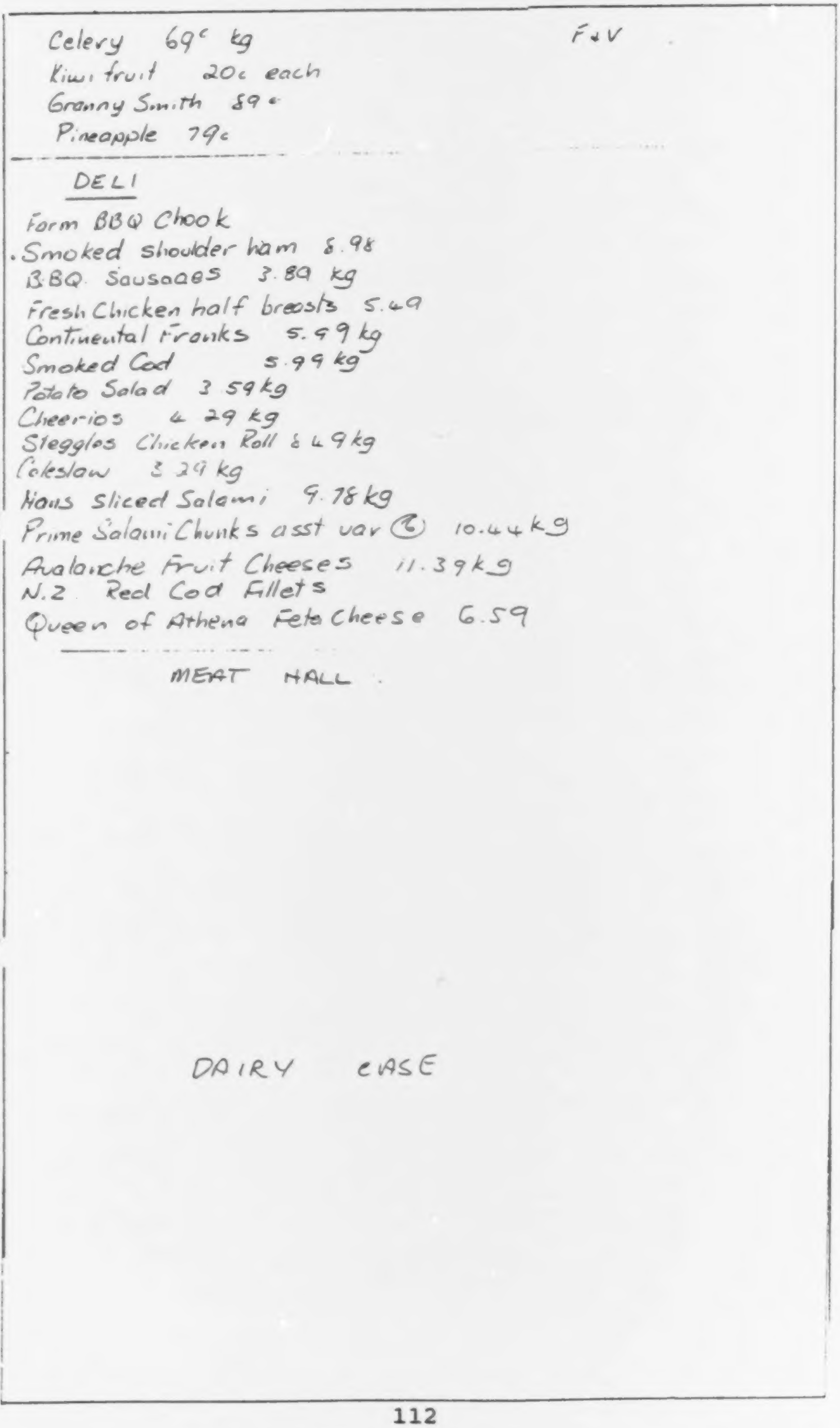
SCANNING STORE REGISTER DISSECTION DEPT. CODING

DEPARTMENT	DEPT. NO.
AUDIO VISUAL	574
AUTO BATTERIES	826
AUTO GENERAL	840
AUTO OILS	819
AUTO TYRES	833
BAKERY	666
BATHING GOODS	055
LIQUOR	925
BEVERAGES	758
BOOKS	239
BOYSWEAR	161
CAFE	673
CAMERA	572
CARDS & WRAPS	253
CHRISTMAS DECS	284
CIGARETTES	222
CLEANING GOODS	390
CONFECTIONERY	444
COOKING REQ.	789
CROCKERY	406
DAIRY	918
DELICATESSEN	888
DESSERTS, CEREALS & SPREADS	765
EASTER EGGS	215
FABRICS	031
FANCY GOODS	338
FASHION GOODS	321
FRAMES & SOUV	352
FRESH PRODUCE	475
FROZEN FOODS	901
FURN.	543
GARDEN (NON/GREEN ART FLOWERS)	437
GARDEN GREENS	499
GIRLS OUTERWEAR	086
GLASSWEAR	413

DEPARTMENT	DEPT. NO.
HABERDASHERY	307
HAIR GOODS	414
HARDWARE	369
HEALTH & BEAUTY	192
H/IMPROVEMENTS	550
HOSIERY	130
H/HOLD APPL	567
H/HOLD P/WARE	260
H/HOLD TEXTILES	017
INFANTWEAR	062
JEWELLERY	345
K. FOOTWEAR DEPT	093
KITCHENWARE	383
KNITTING YARNS	147
KNITWEAR	048
LADIES DRESSES	079
LADIES OUTERWEAR	024
LADIES LINGERIE	116
LADIES SLEEPWEAR	109
LIGHT FITTINGS	482
MEALS	772
MEAT	734
MENSWEAR	154
MINI LAB PROCESS	536
NATURAL FOODS & SPECIALTY	796
PETS	468
PLASTIC WEAR	376
RECORDS	505
SPORTING GOODS	420
STATIONERY	246
TOILETRIES	208
TOYS	277
TRAVEL GOODS	529
UNDERWEAR	123
VEND. MACHINES & HIRE RIDES	581

APPENDIX J

The List



Celery 69c kg
Kiwi fruit 20c each
Granny Smith 89c
Pineapple 79c

F&V

DELI

Farm BBQ Chook
Smoked shoulder ham 8.98
B.BQ. Sausages 3.89 kg
Fresh Chicken half breasts 5.49
Continental Franks 5.99 kg
Smoked Cod 5.99 kg
Potato Salad 3.59kg
Cheerios 4.29 kg
Steggles Chicken Roll 8.49kg
Coleslaw 3.29 kg
Hans Sliced Salami 9.78kg
Prime Salami Chunks asst var ⑥ 10.44kg
Avalanche Fruit Cheeses 11.39kg
N.Z. Red Cod Fillets
Queen of Athena Feta Cheese 6.59

MEAT HALL

DAIRY CASE

APPENDIX K

Sign-on Sheet

Department. DEPT STAFF STRUCTURE Date: 26/6 Store No: 4457

	F OR M	A 6 E	M O N	T U E	W E D	T H U	F R I	S A T	S U N	HOURS ORD O/T (A) O/T (B)	$/HOUR ORD ALLOW/WK O/T (A) O/T (B)	SUB TOTAL $	O/T TOTAL $	TOTAL $
J			8.05 5.30	8.30 6.30	8.10 5.30	8.00 5.00	8.30 5.30							
A			8.05 5.30	8.10 5.30	8.30 5.30	8.00 5.00	8.10 5.30							
L			8.30 12.30	8.10 5.30	8.10 5.30	8.00 5.00	8.10 5.30							

TOTAL

PAYROLL TAX

TOTAL WEEKLY COST

AVERAGE WEEKLY SALES

APPENDIX L

The Count (1)

CIGARETTES AND FRONT END ITEMS

				DATE		18/5		19/5		22/5		24/5					
PAGE 1 ITEM DESCRIPTION	GRADE	CTN QTY	ITEM CODE	A.WS	STOCK COVER	V/S	T/O	V/S	T/O	V/S	T/O	V/S	T/O				
Albany Trim F.T.	CFD	10	105406		1	-/2	-/-	-/2	-/-	-/2	-/-	-/2	-/-				
Alpine 25's/200's	C.F.D	8	296903		12	2/4	-/-	5/3	5/5	15/5	-/-	4/4	4/4				
Alpine Lights 25's/200's	C.F.D	8	296916		8	5/4	-/-	4/4	6/6	18/5	-/-	8/5	NA/5				
Alpine Lights Extra	C.F.D	8	487700		6	1/4	-/-	-/4	5/5	18/5	-/-	8/5	NA/5				
Alpine Menthol 15's	C.F.D	10	243228														
Ardath Virginia 250	C.F.D	8	167436		6	1/4	-/-	-/4	1/1	-/4	2/2	-/4	-/-				

APPENDIX M

The Count (2)

CIGARETTES AND FRONT END ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTION	GRADE	CTN QTY	ITEM CODE	DATE A.W.S	STOCK COVER	8/6 V/S	T/O	9/6 V/S	T/O	V/S	T/O	V/S	T/O	V/S	T/O	V/S	T/O	V/S
TOBACCO																		
MacBarons Mixture PipePouch	CFD	6	371 749															
MacBarons PlumCake	CFD	6	371 760															
Amphora Br Pipe 50g	A-D	5																
Amphora Red Pipe 50g	B	5	105 676		1 1/5	1 3/5	–	1 1/5	–									
Bank Aromatic Tobac 50g	B	10	184 617		6/10	5/6	–	5/6	–									
Capstan Ready Rubbed 50g	CFD	10	105 610		1 5/10	1 2/10	1 / 1	8/10	–									
Champion Fine Cut Tobacco	CFD	10	159 187		1 2/10	1 5/10	–	1 3/10	–									
CIGARETTE PAPERS																		
Tally Ho 50 pk	CFD	100	105687		1 50/100	1 50/100	– / –	2	– / –									
Drum Papers	CFD	100	436 764		50/100	–	– / –	NA / 1	– / –									

APPENDIX N

Assessment Sheet

NAME ______________________________ **CHECKOUT OPERATORS' 20 FUNCTION EFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT SCANNING STORES**

EFFICIENCY RATINGS %	
EXCELLENT	95 - 100%
SATISFACTORY	95 - 94%
IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED	60 - 84%
UNSATISFACTORY OR BELOW	59%
TO BE RE-TRAINED	

		APPEARANCE		ATTITUDE				ACCURACY				CHECKOUT OPERATION						SECURITY									
	DOES CHECKOUT OPERATOR	LOOK WELL GROOMED HAVE UNIFORM CLEAN & PRESSED	WEAR NAME BADGE	GREET CUSTOMER WITH A SMILE	COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMER	REFRAIN FROM TALKING TO OTHER STAFF WHILST SERVING	THANK CUSTOMER AT THE COMPLETION OF SERVICE	SCANNER CLEANED AT REGULAR INTERVALS	SCANNING TECHNIQUE 2 Red lights, enter the APN	ITEMS NOT ON FILE ENTERED TO CORRECT DEPARTMENTS	PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE OF FRESH PRODUCE	HANDLE STOCK WITH CARE PACK ORDER CORRECTLY	REMOVE KIMBLE TAGS	USE FISHTAIL/PACKIN INSERT	CHECK CHANGE PURCHASED	CARRY OUT CHEQUE/CREDIT CARD PROCEDURES TO POLICY	CASH UP/BAG UP CORRECTLY	CHECK FOR CONCEALED MERCHANDISE	CHECK ALL CUSTOMERS SHOPPING BAGS	CHECK IN/UNDER TROLLEY FOR UNPAID ITEMS	CLOSE OFF CHECKOUT SECURELY	TOTAL PENALTY POINTS	TOTAL PENALTY POINTS LOST	RATING POINTS (BALANCE)	EFFICIENTY RATINGS %	MANAGERS INITIALS	OPERATORS INITIALS
POINTS DEDUCTED		40	5	30	15	15	30	10	30	20	20	15	5	5	10	10	5	20	40	15	15	355	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
PERIOD 1 or 7 ASSESSMENT	1st.																										
"	2nd.																										
PERIOD 2 or 8 "	1st.																										
"	2nd.																										
PERIOD 3 or 9 "	1st.																										
"	2nd.																										
PERIOD 4 or 10 "	1st.																										
"	2nd.																										
PERIOD 5 or 11 "	1st.																										
"	2nd.																										
PERIOD 6 or 12 "	1st.																										
"	2nd.																										

SS[illegible]

OPERATORS ARE OBSERVED DAILY

APPENDIX O

Phase 3 - Member Check

Extract from the on-going account of the research (audit trail).

27-2-90 1.30pm

I returned to the store at a time designated by the FEC in order to conduct a member check with L. the only full-time checkout 'operator still operating. Although the time and the day were chosen specifically because this would be the "slackest" period, they were short handed because a 'permanent' had been away sick all week. I wasn't sure therefore whether I would be able to interview L. but we managed.

Initially I spoke to L. as she operated in the kiosk. This was not really satisfactory as she had to keep breaking off to serve people. Taping was also difficult because of the background noise.

I explained that I wanted L. to check what had been written and make any comments on it. Either she could read the report or I could read it to her. She elected to read it herself. We made a start.

Soon L. was relieved for lunch and she agreed to meet me in a nearby cafe to continue. Unfortunately the noise level was just as bad there, which made taping difficult. I also felt some reluctance on the part of L. to use the tape. She tended to draw back from it and so is very faint.

L. read silently and slowly. I got the impression she was checking the information carefully as she read. She pointed out one or two inaccuracies but didn't say much.

She appeared intrigued by the 'lists' as she spent a long time looking at them but she didn't say anything.

When L. came to quoted spoken language she smiled and sometimes laughed aloud but again no comment. The only involuntary comment made was "It must have taken you a long time to write all this".

When L. had finished reading (which took all her lunch period) I formally asked her what she thought:

L. Yeah, they're all the things that you do find in there [the checkout area].

L. What's this?

It's under the bench in the kiosk.

L. Oh yeah, that's right.

It's very good you haven't really missed anything in it.

Is that what you do?

L. Yeah, that's what we do - sometimes we go to different departments and help out.

What is written down is O.K.?

L. Yeah, it's O.K. - you haven't missed anything.